

INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION AS ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE
IN AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

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Jon Hooten

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This dissertation completed by

JON HOOTEN

has been presented to and accepted by the
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partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

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Faculty Committee

Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook, Chairperson

Richard Amesbury

Frank Rogers, Jr.

Dean of the Faculty

Philip Clayton

May 2013

ABSTRACT

Facing a more religiously diverse society, a number of North American theological schools are beginning to welcome students from beyond the Christian tradition into their courses and onto their campuses, perhaps signaling the beginning of a major turn in American theological education. But how do students in the religious minority who enroll in these schools experience these historically Christian institutions? This dissertation presents qualitative case studies of two such theological schools that already have notable numbers of religious minorities among their student populations. This study investigates and describes these students' experiences both within and beyond the classroom in order to characterize the educational ecologies of these schools. Theoretical considerations related to organizational culture, Christian privilege, and cultural hegemony are key to the findings. Drawing on the disciplines of higher education, organizational development, and critical theory, this research makes contributions to the fields of religious and theological education. The dissertation concludes by making a case that theological schools will be more effective in educating religiously diverse student populations if they become "learning organizations"—curious about the particular students they educate—and align their institutional resources, organizational cultures, and extracurricular activities to the shared mission and vision of interreligious education. A diagnostic instrument is included in the appendices for use by institutions seeking to determine responses to religious diversity and approaches to interreligious education.

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The production of a dissertation is an educational process. And it taught me that knowledge should have no owners. Its articulation is seldom solitary, and its benefits should be widely shared. If education is indeed a social process (as John Dewey suggested), then the knowledge created in our schools should be equally as social—freely accessible, collaboratively created, and ultimately owned by those who participated in its construction. What follows, therefore, is knowledge merely gathered and connected in a new configuration, with thanks to all who participated in its assemblage. May we all use it wisely, reflect on it deeply, and build on it with haste for the sake of those who contributed to it and those who will benefit from it in the future.

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INTRODUCTION:

SEMINARIES IN THE NEW RELIGIOUS AMERICA

The diversification of American religiosity has been well documented, and today it is merely a fact of twenty-first-century life. Perhaps no one has described this new reality more lucidly than Diana Eck, who in 2001 captivated scholarly and popular audiences alike with what she described as “a new religious America.” Human migration around the world, she explains, has resulted in not so much a clash of cultures as “the marbling of civilizations and people,” and nowhere is this more evident, she argues, than in the United States. She explains that after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 removed quotas restricting entry from Asia, Oceania, Africa, South America and the Caribbean, the influx of immigrants from these global regions brought a “new georeligious reality” to the United States, leading her to declare America “the world’s most religiously diverse nation.”¹

Though the fact of “the new diversity”² is abundantly evident, the implications of religious pluralism in American society—if not Western civilization—are manifold and complex. Philosopher Charles Taylor famously described our current era as a “secular age,” which if taken without explanation could mean many different things in different contexts. For Taylor, secularity is not the subtraction theories popular among sociologists—that Westerners are increasingly (1) private about or (2) “sloughing off” their religious commitments—but rather the new conditions of belief that now exist in

¹Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Now Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001).

²Frederick W. Norris, “Religious Demographics and the New Diversity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Diversity*, ed. Chad Meister (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 201-213.

religiously diverse and immanently focused, disenchanted societies. Today, belief in God is no longer the assumed state of things; instead, it's one religious choice among the many in our collective cultural consciousness.

The influence of this phenomenon is obviously far-reaching and is beginning to affect American theological schools. Increasingly, we can no longer assume that everyone in the seminary classroom is Christian. In this “new religious America,” Christianity is increasingly likely to be one possible religious identity—though still the dominant one—among several. Indeed, theological education is undergoing its own process of secularization, along with the rest of the West.

Eck suggested in 2001 that theological schools were ill equipped to prepare the clergy for the realities of a multireligious society.³ Theological schools have made great strides in the last decade to grapple with religious diversity, with a growing number of schools offering courses on other religious traditions, interreligious dialogue, religious diversity, and pluralism. In 2009, researchers at the Center for Multifaith Education at Auburn Seminary surveyed 150 North American theological schools and found more than 1,200 courses offered about religious traditions beyond Christianity.⁴ Several schools across the United States and Canada have begun offering concentrations, certificates, and even a few degree programs focused on various interreligious concerns. This heightened awareness that religious literacy is needed in Christian ministry is beginning to alter how theological schools prepare their students. Perhaps just as

³Eck, *A New Religious America*, 23.

⁴Lucinda Allen Mosher and Justus N. Baird, “Beyond World Religions: The State of Multifaith Education in American Theological Schools” (Center for Multifaith Education, Auburn Seminary, 2009), <http://www.auburnseminary.org/seminarystudy> (accessed June 20, 2012).

significant is that more than a few of these institutions are attracting—if not proactively recruiting—students and faculty who are not Christian. While several elite theological schools have had non-Christian students and faculty for decades, this is a new phenomenon for most American theological schools, and it's a trend that will most likely continue.

If the past is prologue, then we have much to learn from how theological education has been transformed by the arrival of new types of students, generational and demographic shifts, and the concerns that new populations bring to theological schools. In the 1970s, women began to enroll *en masse* in seminaries, which required significant shifts by theological schools to adapt and be transformed by the implication of feminist theology and the presence of women in the classroom. This shift was documented by a group of women scholars, the Cornwall Collective, in *Your Daughters Shall Prophecy: Feminist Alternatives in Theological Education*.⁵ In the mid-1980s, women of color also began enrolling in theological schools in greater numbers, which posed challenges to the white feminist establishment as well as to the institutions that were still largely led by men. We read about this shift in *God's Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education*, which was a response of sorts to the Cornwall Collective by a multicultural group of women that called itself the Mud Flower Collective.⁶ By the 1990s, seminaries experienced a growing emphasis on the increasing globalization of theological education, with international students and global forms of Christianity challenging Western modes of theology and ministry. The current concern, therefore,

⁵Cornwall Collective, *Your Daughters Shall Prophecy: Feminist Alternatives in Theological Education* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980).

⁶Katie G. Cannon and Mud Flower Collective, *God's Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1985).

with the proliferation of students who are not Christian but who choose to attend Christian theological schools is the latest—and no less significant—opportunity for the transformation of American theological schools.

Theological schools across the landscape will respond to the new diversity in various ways. Some will simply choose to ignore that the world is growing more religiously diverse, and they will not quickly recognize the ways it affects their graduates as they enter ministry and scholarship. Some schools will choose on doctrinal grounds not to adopt interreligious curricula, choosing instead an exclusivist stance against pluralistic education.⁷ Of the theological schools that *do* engage in interreligious education, some will focus on educating Christians for ministry in a multireligious society. The emphasis of such schools will often be on learning about other traditions so their ministerial graduates can better address the day-to-day concerns—intermarriage, spiritual counseling, conducting rites of passage, etc.—of a multireligious society. And other schools will seek to welcome students and faculty who are not Christian as members of their communities; they will choose to retain their Christian institutional identities while at the same time fostering multireligious community. Still others will choose to become effectively interreligious in composition and mission, moving away from their Christian histories to become more pluralistic and interreligious institutions. There will be variations on each of these options, and many shades of gray will emerge in between them. However, these represent the spectrum of live options that are already becoming realities in American theological education. Regardless of how institutions

⁷ This is despite the fact that one outcome of interreligious education and religious literacy is an increased facility to proselytize to non-Christian religions. See Mosher and Baird, “Beyond World Religions.”

respond to the new religious landscape, one can only hope that they all will approach their efforts with educational integrity—with the best interests of the students involved—for the sake of the students' development and the communities they will ultimately serve.

Perhaps most critical to the question of religious diversity in theological education, therefore, is the attentive regard that our institutions give to the students who are not Christian but who are recruited and welcomed into our communities. Those of us who work and teach in theological schools understand to varying degrees how unique these institutions are in the broader landscape of higher education as well as religious organizations. Religious minorities in theological education will often bring little knowledge about or experience with the organizational subcategory of “graduate theological education.” This will leave some students in vulnerable positions relative to the dominant organizational, educational and religious cultures deeply rooted in these schools. The students may unwittingly consent and comply, either through ambivalence or mimicry, with explicit or unspoken institutional norms, even when doing so works against their own educational success, intellectual development, and religious formation. It seems that institutions would be well served, therefore, to identify and disrupt those norms that may work against the interests of this new population of students—as difficult and painful as that may be.

These institutions must also remember that religious majorities and minorities experience interreligious education differently. In an eye-opening study in the mid-1990s, empirical theologian Carl Sterkens found that Christian students experience religious diversity and interreligious education differently than non-Christian students. His study surveyed 650 children in Protestant and Catholic schools in Europe that were (1)

religiously diverse in composition and (2) using an interreligious curriculum. The majority of students in each class were Christian, and the religious minorities were most commonly Muslim and Hindu. He found that upon completion of the curriculum, Christian students had improved attitudes toward the religious minorities, with a general increase in positive feelings about other religions and decrease in exclusivist claims against other religions. He also found that Christian students were more secure in their own religiosity as a result of the experience, meaning they were not often swayed to convert to another tradition or become more secular. He also notes that positive results correlated to the ratio of religious minorities in the class: greater proportions of Muslim and Hindu students present in a class (i.e., increased religious diversity) resulted in more positive attitudinal and affective results in the Christian students.

The students in the religious minority, however, presented no positive results connected to either the curriculum or the diversity of the classroom. They did not experience correlative improvements to those of the religious majority. Attitudes toward Christians generally did not improve as a result of either the curriculum or the diversity of the classroom. Apparently, the presence of diversity does not necessarily affect the students who comprise the “diversity.”⁸

Sterkens concludes, therefore, that interreligious education should involve more than learning about religion in a multireligious classroom. He suggests that issues of religious status and dominance must also be considered and that the curriculum and teacher should account for religious asymmetry and power dynamics among different groups. He also warns that interreligious education can be *detrimental* to religious

⁸Carl Sterkens, *Interreligious Learning: The Problem of Interreligious Dialogue in Primary Education* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

minorities and possibly result in increased religious centrism and even active resistance against the educational process. This research implies that neither an interreligious curriculum nor a multireligious classroom is enough; both are needed to begin the process, but most certainly there is more needed than these two facets. Religious diversity can be beneficial if the teacher is aware of and properly prepares for the impacts of class, status, and religious hegemony in the classroom.

The same is true of students' experience beyond the classroom in the educational institution, which is the primary focus of this study. Diversity of any stripe can and should be an attribute for any educational institution, especially for theological schools. But it must be addressed directly, explicitly, and honestly for the sake of the students' success. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier has written eloquently about the promise of diversity as an educational and theological resource, explaining that the presence of cultural diversity in an educational context provides students the opportunity to reflect on their core assumptions about others, challenge dominant assumptions at play in particular contexts, and ultimately participate in the co-creation of new knowledge and practices alongside those different from them. She calls this pedagogical approach "perspective transformation," which involves "revealing and unraveling" normative assumptions in particular contexts.⁹ The following study is informed by this orientation and will show the necessity of institutional transformation in theological education, revealing the challenges and opportunities that seminaries have with the influx of religious minorities in their classrooms, chapels, and co-curricular activities.

This brings us to the central questions, therefore, that have prodded this study

⁹Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, "Cultural Diversity as a Theological Resource," *Religious Studies News*, March (2007): v.

forward: How can Christian theological schools best support the development of students who are not Christian? How might these institutions “reveal and unravel” the normative assumptions of Christian theological education for the sake of a new population of students who are not Christian? How might these schools orient themselves to become more religiously diverse while not doing harm to students in the religious minority? And what tools do faculty and administrators in these schools have at their disposal to respond effectively and with educational integrity to a religiously diverse student body?

Chapter 1 begins to untangle these questions with an overview of what has become known as Christian privilege. Borrowing language from multiculturalism and gender studies, Christian privilege generally refers to the unspoken advantages that most Christians generally enjoy in Western society. Drawing on research in the fields of organizational culture and educational studies, we will explore the ways in which theological schools—even ones that are seeking with best intentions to become interreligious—maintain hegemonic patterns of Christian privilege and religious centrism that silently reinforce deep assumptions and behaviors that can negatively affect their students who are not Christian.

Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework and methodological approaches for the two case studies that follow in chapters 3 and 4. The two theological schools that this study examines are both remarkable institutions that have deep and abiding commitments to interreligious theological education. For many years, they both have recruited and welcomed students who are not Christian to their campuses, and each has demonstrated very different yet effective ways of caring for religious minorities in their student bodies. I am grateful for their participation and spend ample space in chapter 2

describing their participation. This chapter also lays a theoretical foundation for how and why theological schools that are becoming more multireligious might go about researching their own changing student demographics. The research method I develop and employ here will likely be useful to theological schools seeking to conduct similar examinations of their own students' experiences for the sake of institutional and educational advancement.

The final chapter discusses the lessons learned from these studies and proposes recommendations for institutions that are growing more multireligious. Of course, there is no formula, no one handbook that could be written about interreligious education in American theological schools. But this dissertation is a first step in spurring institutional conversations about how theological schools might orient themselves for successful education of multireligious student populations.

Perhaps most important is a word about my inspiration and motivation in choosing this topic. When I came to Claremont School of Theology in 2005 as a doctoral student in the field of practical theology, the topic of interreligious education was not a major theme in the discipline generally or this institution specifically. A mere four years later, interreligious education became a central concern of my institution and is growing into a new field of research and practice. Claremont School of Theology is incubating a new interreligious university, Claremont Lincoln University, which is partnering with a transdenominational rabbinical school (the Academy for Jewish Religion, California) and the largest *masjid* in the region (Islamic Center of Southern California, which is launching Bayan Claremont, a graduate school for Muslim education) to offer an interreligious curriculum. Not only have I been a student in this emerging educational

ecology, I am also an administrator who is witnessing firsthand the issues that are arising with the diversification of this educational community. The experiment at Claremont has taken a unique approach to graduate interreligious education by creating a consortium that requires its member schools to remain firmly committed to religious education in their own traditions while also contributing to a new interreligious institution around which the consortium is organized.

Within a relatively short period of time, the palpable challenges of incubating an interreligious university from a Christian theological school have become daily concerns for me, not only in my doctoral studies but in my professional life as well. My interest and involvement is an entanglement of scholarly, professional, and personal concerns. And it is with great respect and responsibility that those of us who began this journey in Protestant seminaries make room for those from other religious traditions. Disrupting our age-old patterns of theological education will not be without growing pains, conflict, and failures, which is all the more reason why the organizational concerns of interreligious education should be critically examined.

This is the context in which I write about the wellbeing of religious minorities in interreligious education. And it is not a task I take lightly.

CHAPTER 1:

CULTURE AND PRIVILEGE IN THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

Those of us who work in theological education can sometimes forget that our institutions represent a small subdivision of the wider world of higher education. While there is much that makes theological education highly unique among other institutions of higher learning, there is as much or more that we have in common with, and can learn from, other types of educational organizations. And our schools are indeed *organizations*, which places them in an even broader body of literature and expands the options of resources available to us as we strive to adapt and thrive. In an investigation of theological education such as this, the disciplines of educational studies and organizational development have much to offer by way of tools and perspectives that are often overlooked by both faculty and administration.

Organizational Culture and Institutional Thinking

The work that modernist sociologists (such as Weber and Durkheim) have conducted on organizations is well known, but investigation into organizational culture is relatively recent, having emerged as a fresh field of inquiry in the early 1980s with a flurry of articles and books. Researchers developed the subfield by drawing on insights and methods from the disciplines of business and management, education, and various disciplines across the social sciences to develop the fledgling field (as a 1985 citational analysis of the literature suggests).¹⁰ Perhaps the simplest, and most well-known,

¹⁰William G. Ouchi and Alan L. Wilkins, "Organizational Culture," *Annual Review of Sociology* 11 (1985): 457–483. According to this study, the four most commonly cited authors in the fledgling field of organizational studies included: Clifford Geertz

definition of the phenomenon, they say, is found in Terrence E. Deal's influential 1982 book *Corporate Cultures*, in which Deal describes organizational culture simply as "the way we do things around here."¹¹ This deceptively concise explanation deserves a slightly more involved explication.

Edgar H. Schein, who taught management for most of his career at MIT, literally wrote the textbook on organizational culture. The widely respected researcher first published *Organizational Culture and Leadership* in 1985, and it now is in its fourth edition. Schein offers a rather comprehensive description of organizational culture, explaining that it is "both a dynamic phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interactions with others ... [and] a set of structures, routines, rules and norms that guide and constrain the behavior."¹² Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal describe it similarly, if more poetically, calling organizational culture "both a product and a process. As a product, it embodies accumulated wisdom from those who came before us. As a process, it is constantly renewed and re-created as newcomers learn the old ways and eventually become teachers themselves."¹³ Schein also offers what he calls a "formal definition" of organizational or group culture, saying it is:

(anthropology), Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (sociology), Burton Clark (education), and Terrence E. Deal and Allan Kennedy (education/management).

¹¹Terrence E. Deal, *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1982). Cited in Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 243. In 1999, Deal and Peterson identify an older reference to this phrase in: Marvin Bower, *The Will to Manage: Corporate Success Through Programmed Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966). See Terrence E. Deal and Kent D. Peterson, *Shaping School Culture: The Heart of Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 3.

¹²Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 1.

¹³Bolman and Deal, *Reframing Organizations*, 243–244.

a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.¹⁴

Ultimately, as we will see more fully in chapter 2, Schein is interested in that which culture points to, what he calls the deep underlying assumptions of an organization. “We can think of culture as the accumulated learning of a given group,” he says, “covering behavioral, emotional, and cognitive elements of the group members’ total psychological functioning.”¹⁵ Obviously, this hints at something much more significant than what we may often think of as an organization’s culture; it’s much more than small talk around the water cooler.

Around the same time that Schein was formulating this understanding of organizational culture, noted sociologist Mary Douglas was thinking along similar, though more theoretical, lines. In 1986 she wrote a thin, dense book entitled *How Institutions Think*, which explores the ways in which institutions guide our cognition, or as she says, “the extent to which thinking depends on institutions.”¹⁶ It is important to note the specialized, counterintuitive way in which she uses the term “institution.” She explains it is minimally a “convention” wherein all those involved have a common interest in the ground rules.¹⁷ Sometimes an institution is an entire organization (most sociologists would make this distinction between an institution and an organization), but an institution can also exist in the form of a family, a game, or a ceremony. She uses the example of traffic laws as institutions: We don’t care which side of the road we drive on,

¹⁴Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 17.

¹⁵Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 17.

¹⁶Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 8.

¹⁷Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, 46.

as long as we all agree on the same side.¹⁸ Sometimes our conventions and expectations are codified explicitly, as is the case with driving. But while some institutions can be found as rules in the employee handbook, it's more often the case that behavioral, cognitive, and emotional expectations are unspoken, undisputed, and deeply rooted in conceptual schemes that are communicated socially through the institutions in which we participate.¹⁹

For example, when a student enters a classroom, general expectations for behavior and discourse for that context exist; some of these span the conventions of education generally, while others are localized in certain schools and disciplines being taught within those schools. A college class in philosophy will have different expectations than a one-on-one guitar lesson in the music department, even when they are held at the same school. The rules of the game—behavioral expectations, core assumptions—will likely not be made explicit to the students by faculty or administration, so the expectations for each are communicated by the institutions—the conventions—and are continually and reciprocally established and revised together by faculty, administration, and students.

Douglas goes a step further to suggest that institutions establish implicit categories of cognition in and among individuals. For simple discourse to be possible, a group must be able to draw on the same basic cognitive schemes and speak the same languages. These cognitive categories provide patterns, she says, which both legitimate certain thoughts and render others taboo—or even unthinkable at all.²⁰ Douglas argues

¹⁸Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, 46.

¹⁹Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, 55.

²⁰Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, 59–60.

that institutions are more closely grounded in our understandings of reality than we are often ready to admit. If we identify and interrogate an institution with the question “Why?” enough times, we can begin to uncover some of our shared motivations and assumptions, which are not superficial or spurious. The institutions in which we participate therefore are closely related to how we understand the world; and when they are not, we have low loyalty to them or leave them behind altogether. In as much as a group of people—co-workers or students, for example—can engage in protracted discourse and work together toward common ends, Douglas would say they are acting on their fundamental understandings of reality as organized in shared institutions.

She goes on to demonstrate how institutions confer what she calls “sameness” on those who participate in the institution. “Once a theoretical scheme has been developed, elements that in the pretheoretical stage were of dubious standing lose their ambiguity,” she says. “Sameness is not a quality that can be recognized in things themselves; it is conferred upon elements within a coherent scheme.”²¹ In constructing sameness, then, institutions do the hard work for their members by holding the environment steady enough for discourse to happen. They provide the mechanisms—the legitimating categories—for shared thinking and acting. In this sense, by conferring sameness on a group, institutions essentially constrain the thoughts we have, the thoughts we are allowed to have, and the thoughts that we can ever imagine having.

As suggested above, Douglas would make a clear distinction between what we understand as “institutions” and “organizations.” Institutions take on various forms at different economies of scale. Organizations, as groups of people, are always composed of

²¹Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, 59.

institutions and can even be considered institutions themselves. An organization is usually an institution, but an institution is not always an organization. Though this precise distinction is of more or less consequence depending on the context, it is helpful in articulating a critique of Douglas's work. While I doubt she would disagree, it is important to note that her account of "how institutions think" does not necessarily address how organizations think, especially those composed of varied individuals with diverse interests and experiences. If the institutions in which a particular group participates comprise conceptual categories for discourse and action, then how does she account for those who disagree with and rebel against certain institutions while still associating with the group? Do the conceptual categories apply equally and evenly across an institutionalized group? At what point does resistance against an institution begin to transform it into something new? It seems there may be more at play in organizational settings than the transmission of sameness, and the study of organizational culture helps uncover some of those dynamics.

Schein would likely agree with Douglas about the role of institutions, as he makes similar claims that organizations provide conceptual categories for common understanding and action. But Schein goes a step further to describe insider-outsider dynamics within organizations.²² With the norms and assumptions of an organization come the integration and initiation of new members into the culture. Institutional inertia dictates that our organizational cultures often are not radically, immediately changed by newcomers, if they are altered at all. This is as true of a new chief executive as it is of those who enter the organization further down the hierarchy. In higher education, for

²²Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 19.

example, we cannot assume that diversifying the faculty or student body will automatically or immediately change the culture in significant ways; as long as the assumptions and norms are preserved through institutions, the dominant forces will likely overpower cultural outliers.

While Douglas focuses on cognitive schemes, Schein and others in this field²³ understand organizational culture as a site of “meaning-making,” where groups decipher and make sense of a shared reality in order to operate. Organizational cultures are laden with symbols and codes, rituals and ceremonies that are constantly and concurrently bestowing meaning at various levels and frequencies. The language of culture allows us to move beyond the social-cognitive theories of Douglas to name the irrational, fluid, complex, conflicting, porous, plurivocal nature of organizations. The conceptual language associated with culture allows for critiques of organizations as monolithic and unified. Examination of an organization’s culture allows for the identification of subcultures and counter-cultures within it, the consideration of which tends to put an organization’s normative claims in relief.

Douglas leans in this direction toward the end of her book, suggesting that individuals strive to uncover the invisible influences that institutions have on their participants. In order for institutions to be changed, she calls for individuals to resist the invisible influences that institutions have on the mind, to discover how institutions are setting the categories.²⁴ She calls for us to make the implicit explicit, to make the unthinkable thinkable. Of course, this is often easier described than accomplished.

²³ Perhaps most notable is the work of Karl Weick. For example, Karl E. Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations*, Foundations for Organizational Science (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1995).

²⁴ Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, 92.

Implicit Curriculum and Theological Education

In educational organizations, the notion of culture takes on another facet that other organizations do not encounter or have to address explicitly. When an organization exists for the sake of educating students, then the effects of its culture take on heightened significance, as a part of the educational ecology in which a student learns. Those who study and administer student affairs in undergraduate contexts have recognized this for quite some time. While the curriculum taught by faculty in the lecture hall represents the primary framework for a school, what happens outside of class is as important—if not more influential—for students' development. By participating in extracurricular or cocurricular activities offered by an educational institution, students have the opportunity to practice skills and develop self-awareness alongside their classroom lessons. In one study, a researcher found that “for about 40 percent of students, the do-it-yourself side of college [what took place outside of the classroom] was the most significant educational experience.”²⁵ Noted educational researcher George Kuh, in surveying the literature on extracurricular impacts on student experiences, suggests that “most scholars who study the effects of college on students agree that what happens outside the classroom—the other curriculum—can contribute to valued outcomes in college.”²⁶ He concludes that not only do experiences beyond the classroom provide *opportunities* for students to develop important skills, those experiences often *demand* student development in ways that the classroom cannot. Since colleges and universities do not usually require students to

²⁵Michael Moffatt, *Coming of Age in New Jersey: College and American Culture* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989). Cited in George D. Kuh, “The Other Curriculum: Out-of-Class Experiences Associated with Student Learning and Personal Development,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 66, no. 2 (March 1, 1995): 124.

²⁶Kuh, “The Other Curriculum,” 124.

participate in extracurricular activities, it is incumbent on schools to create the conditions in which students would be attracted to such important educational opportunities.²⁷

Those familiar with curriculum development can probably hear echoes of the theoretical framework presented by Elliot Eisner in his landmark text, first published in 1979, entitled *The Educational Imagination*.²⁸ Eisner identifies in this book what he calls “the three curricula that all schools teach”: the explicit curriculum (that which is taught in the classroom), the implicit curriculum (that which is implied by the way the school approaches its work), and the null curriculum (that which the school chooses not to teach).²⁹ Eisner spends a great deal of time discussing the importance and impacts of implicit curriculum, describing the various ways a school “teaches” by what it expects, how it structures itself, what it prioritizes, and what it rewards. The implicit curriculum is “that pervasive and ubiquitous set of expectations and rules that defines schooling as a cultural system that itself teaches important lessons,” he says.³⁰ It’s what a school teaches “because of the kind of place it is.”³¹

Eisner’s notion of implicit curriculum provides the foundation for, and indeed encompasses, the previous discussion of the importance of extracurricular activities in colleges and universities, since such opportunities for student engagement are part of the educational ecology of an institution. What is critical from Eisner’s work for the present study is the impact of a school’s culture on the educational outcomes and effectiveness of

²⁷Kuh, “The Other Curriculum.” 150.

²⁸Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2002).

²⁹ Eisner opens the chapter by this title with an epigraph from John Dewey: “Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying.”

³⁰Eisner, *The Educational Imagination*, 107.

³¹Eisner, *The Educational Imagination*, 97.

a school. Deal and Kennedy build on Eisner's framework and summarize more recent research that demonstrates how a strong school culture affects educational effectiveness, commitment, organizational change, and vitality of faculty and staff. "Cultural patterns [in schools] are highly enduring," they conclude, "have a powerful impact on performance, and shape the ways people think, act and feel."³² And nowhere is this more relevant, I want to suggest, than in theological education.

The importance of culture in education was one of the primary conclusions of the major ethnographic project conducted in the mid-1990s by a group led by Jackson Carroll, which published its findings in the book *Being There: Culture and Transformation in Two Theological Schools*.³³ The group engaged in a multi-year investigation of two American theological schools—one evangelical and one mainline Protestant—to understand how students experience ministerial formation in these institutions. They found that even though the institutions are quite different in many if not most regards, they exhibited similar educational and cultural patterns related to student formation.

The authors explain that theological schools, like all educational institutions, have a large transient population: the students. When students enter a theological school, they often experience what the authors describe as "culture clash." The school is religious but probably in ways that are quite different from the students' home churches or even denominations. As students begin to socialize into the culture, they negotiate with it. They "try on" certain aspects of new theologies, methods, or rituals. They also resist and

³²Deal and Peterson, *Shaping School Culture*, 4–7.

³³Jackson W. Carroll et al., *Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

reject certain aspects of the culture; they may participate in subcultural and countercultural actions through special student groups, publications, community protest, and other forms of subversion. The study found this phenomenon in both schools and noticed a correlation between these formative aspects of a school's culture and a student's participation in it. The more involved a student is in the school's culture, the more the student is impacted by it. They conclude that

the culture that develops over time in a school—its core normative habits and values and its range of permissible variations of thought and behavior—has a profound effect on its students as they encounter the school's culture and engage in the contests that result from different views, attitudes, and habits that they bring with them into the school.³⁴

If students engage in the give and take of their school's institutional cultures, they will take some of the culture with them when they leave the school, and they will leave part of themselves behind. Like any organizational culture, the environs of a theological school is participatory and flexible but resistant to intentional change or manipulation. The authors point to what Berger and Luckmann call the “plausibility structures” of an institution that the long-term members of the community cultivate and maintain (which are akin to the institutions and conventions Douglas describes above).³⁵ Students come and go, but faculty and staff tend to stay longer and maintain the norms and practices of an educational institution.

The consideration of culture within organizations, especially in postmodern context, begs the question of organizational subcultures and countercultures that challenge the metanarratives of an organization's dominant culture. Those working from perspectives informed by critical theory and postcolonialism often see organizations and

³⁴Carroll et al., *Being There*, 270.

³⁵Carroll et al., *Being There*, 265.

their cultures as sites of corporate hegemony, where managerial and executive elites exert domination—forcefully or otherwise—over those with less capital and authority within the organization. As one such observer puts it, “Corporate culture, if uncritically examined, maintains an ideology, which is socially constructed to reflect and legitimize the power relations of managerial élites [sic] within an organization and society at large.”³⁶ This researcher goes on to remind us that organizational cultures are also “multicultural,” meaning they are comprised of multiple subcultures, and most members of the organization belong to more than one subculture.³⁷ The importance of this phenomenon will become more pronounced as we explore the subcultures and countercultures of minority religions within Christian theological schools.

Christian Privilege

Alongside the notion of hegemony rides the concept of privilege. Many contemporaries writing on social privilege refer to the 1988 paper written by Peggy McIntosh, who drew comparisons between feminist theories of male privilege and the unearned advantages of white people in Western societies. She describes white privilege as an “invisible package of unearned assets ... like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, code-books, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks” that she, as a white woman, can “cash in”

³⁶John O. Ogbor, “Critical Theory and the Hegemony of Corporate Culture,” *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 14, no. 6 (January 12, 2001): 591. This perspective puts Douglas’s observations in a political frame, which is an important variation on the theme.

³⁷Harrison Miller Trice and Janice M Beyer, eds., *The Cultures of Work Organizations* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall, 1993), 175. Cited in Ogbor, “Critical Theory and the Hegemony of Corporate Culture,” 595.

on a daily basis.³⁸ Perhaps her concept of privilege can more concisely be described as a set of unearned social benefits, a pattern of assumptions passed through the generations that determine what a society accepts as normal. As she became aware of her identity and privilege as a white person, she began keeping a list of what she calls “special circumstances and conditions” that she did not earn but are conferred upon her by society:

I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely and positively represented.

I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.

I can go into a book shop and count on finding the writing of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods that fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser’s shop and find someone who can deal with my hair.

I can be reasonably sure that if I ask to talk to “the person in charge,” I will be facing a person of my race.

Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance that I am financially reliable.

If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.³⁹

McIntosh recently told the story of how the list developed, saying that after three months of accumulating examples for the list, “a voice in me said, ‘Peggy, write it down. Its probably the most important work you’ll do in your life.’”⁴⁰ Indeed, her contribution has had a notable impact theories and practices of antiracism and critical pedagogy.

This effect is abundantly evident as the notion of privilege is being adapted to

³⁸Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women’s Studies,” Working Paper #189 (Wellesley, Mass.: Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, 1988), 1–2.

³⁹McIntosh, “White Privilege and Male Privilege,” 5–9.

⁴⁰W. K. Kellogg Foundation, “Facing Her Own Race,” <http://www.wkkf.org/what-we-support/racial-equity/stories/facing-her-own-race.aspx> (accessed July 16, 2012).

other categories of collective social advantage, including religious preference in a society. A body of scholarship on Christian privilege has emerged in recent years, drawing explicitly on McIntosh's notion of precritical normalcy. Warren Blumenfeld, for example, describes Christian privilege as "constituting a seemingly invisible, unearned and largely unacknowledged array of benefits accorded to Christians" that passes as "common sense, as 'normal,' as universal."⁴¹ Ellen E. Fairchild writes that the invisible assumption of Christianity in society "confers benefits on Christians while denying them to those who are not of the same faith."⁴² Lewis Z. Schlosser—perhaps the most prolific author on the subject—suggests that religious privilege in the United States is "likely a result of Christianity being the nonconscious ideology" in the Christian majority of American society.⁴³ He even adapted a list of conditions (*à la* McIntosh) that Christians do not likely encounter due to their religious affiliation and commitments.⁴⁴

Several common threads run through this fledgling body of literature on Christian privilege. Most of these writings are situated in the context of the United States and reference the broad national setting in which Christianity is the majority tradition and is pervasive and deeply rooted in American culture; this is to say that the literature largely does not address "micro-contexts"—organizations or schools, for example—in which Christian privilege emerges in unique ways. Researchers in this area also generally point

⁴¹Warren J. Blumenfeld, "Christian Privilege and the Promotion of 'Secular' and Not-so 'Secular' Mainline Christianity in Public Schooling and in the Larger Society," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 39, no. 3 (2006): 195, 196.

⁴² Ellen E. Fairchild, "Christian Privilege, History, and Trends in U.S. Religion," in *Intersections of Religious Privilege: Difficult Dialogues and Student Affairs Practice*, ed. Sherry K. Watt (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 5.

⁴³Lewis Z. Schlosser, "Christian Privilege: Breaking a Sacred Taboo," *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* 31, no. 1 (2003): 47.

⁴⁴ This list will be addressed further in Chapter 2.

to the ways in which Christian privilege confers advantages on most, if not all, Christians, and especially (though not exclusively) Protestant Christians. Lori Beaman explains that “Protestantism, and to some extent Catholicism, are constructed as the normal against which the ‘other’ is established.”⁴⁵ Schlosser and Blumenfeld recognize, however, that certain Christian groups (such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Amish, Seventh-Day Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses) are often seen as marginal to mainstream Christianity, yet they still generally benefit from Christian privilege. It may even be argued that “cultural Christians”—those who no longer affiliate with a particular community but who were raised in a Christian tradition—also benefit from these social advantages (for example, days off for national holidays and other observances rooted in Christian tradition coincide with family holiday celebrations). As one group of scholars puts it, “All Christians benefit from Christian privilege regardless of the way they express themselves as Christians in the same way that all White people benefit from White privilege ...”⁴⁶

The literature is nearly unanimous in the claim that Christian privilege not only confers advantages on a certain group but does so at the expense of those who are not in the majority. Blumenfeld is unambiguous about this assertion, arguing that the unacknowledged structure of benefits “confers dominance on Christians while

⁴⁵Lori G. Beaman, “The Myth of Pluralism, Diversity, and Vigor: The Constitutional Privilege of Protestantism in the United States and Canada,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42, no. 3 (September 2003): 313.

⁴⁶Christine Clark, Mark Brimhall Vargas, and Lewis Schlosser, “Diversity Initiatives in Higher Education: It’s Not Just ‘Secret Santa’ in December: Addressing Educational and Workplace Climate Issues Linked to Christian Privilege,” *Multicultural Education* 10, no. 2 (2002): 56.

subordinating members of other faith communities as well as non-believers.”⁴⁷ He considers Christian privilege as a form of hegemony, which necessarily excludes the needs, concerns, and experiences of those who are not Christian from social consideration. Beaman calls for more focus on the concrete ways in which mainstream religion works to keep religions on the margins. “Hegemony binds, restricts, and excludes in ways that have yet to be fully explored,” Beaman says.⁴⁸ “At times subtle,” Blumenfeld concludes, “Christian hegemony is oppression by neglect, omission, erasure and distortion.”⁴⁹ In the United States, it is the cultural water in which we swim.

Pluralism and Hegemony

Addressing advantages that the religious majority enjoys raises an important conceptual question about the definition and circumscription of those religious traditions and adherents in the minority, which (as Beaman reminds us) are defined in the shadow of the majority. Perhaps even more problematic is when well-meaning members of the majority—including those in the academy—attempt to be pluralistic in their approach and inclusive of other traditions without addressing the underlying hegemonic tendencies of Christian privilege in American context. This is precisely the phenomenon that historian Tomoko Masuzawa addresses in her book *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*.⁵⁰

Her primary thesis is that the concept of “world religions,” as an intellectual

⁴⁷Blumenfeld, “Christian Privilege,” 195.

⁴⁸Beaman, “The Myth of Pluralism, Diversity, and Vigor,” 321.

⁴⁹Blumenfeld, “Christian Privilege,” 196.

⁵⁰Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

category, grew out of and perpetuates a Eurocentric (Christian) hegemony, even though masked by the notion of religious pluralism. An intellectual and cultural historian, she traces the origin of the term “world religions” to how it originally functioned in nineteenth-century scholarship. Prior to this period, the notion of religion was generally not delineated as a distinct concept or phenomenon, she explains, separate or separable from the nation-state. Philosopher Charles Taylor would say that religion before this presecular era was still “enchanted” and “cosmic,” simply part of the universe (and, perhaps, the geopolitical contexts) in which humanity found itself.⁵¹ By the end of the eighteenth century, however, European scholars were dividing religions into a four-fold schema: Christianity, Judaism, the “Mohammedans,” and “the rest,” which were generally considered to include various varieties of paganism and polytheism.⁵² This schema, which disenchanting and defined all religiosity in the shadow of Christianity, meant that the European religion was presumed to be the one true universal transnational religion, as opposed to the indigenous “national religions” (*Landesreligionen*) of foreign lands.⁵³

A critical turning point, she explains, emerged in the 1880s when the scientific/academic study of religion (*Religionswissenschaft*) began developing subclassifications of “world religions,” with more than one religion belonging to the genus. Buddhism (a neologism) was the first new “great religion” during this period that was “conceptually constructed as a world religion from the beginning,” Masuzawa

⁵¹ See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁵² Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 47.

⁵³ Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 23.

says.⁵⁴ Buddhism ascended to such a lofty position, she explains, because of the categories used by those doing the classifying: it was transnational in scope (like Christianity) and from the Aryan linguistic family, as was most of Europe (and, thus, Christianity). It was defined with Western/Christian categories, which affected its regard in the Western mind. Islam posed an unexpected challenge to the classification system: even though it was Semitic (and therefore lesser), it was also transnational in scope and was a formidable presence throughout history. This disruption eventually helped loosen the categorical schema and, by the 1880s, the list of “world religions” had grown to approximately what we might recognize today. The 1893 Parliament of the World’s Religions, Masuzawa says, is a significant marker of this shift, as representatives of the world’s ten “great religions” converged on Chicago. As each of these “great religions” became better known and understood in the West, European scholars developed a more comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding these non-European realities. This framework erroneously and hegemonically assumed, however, that religion operated similarly in other contexts, that “a non-European nation of any stature was presumed to have one (or sometimes more than one) of these world religions in lieu of Christianity,” Masuzawa explains.⁵⁵ These scholars assumed that the world religions likewise shaped the structure and tastes of these societies, as Christianity has done in the West. Clearly, the European scholars were projecting concerns for their own social identity—which was increasingly secularized, rational, and modernized—in their assessment of other

⁵⁴Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 24.

⁵⁵Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 18.

societies.⁵⁶

The lessons of this intellectual history are relevant today, Masuzawa concludes, as questions of religious diversity and the “world religions” are again becoming central to religious and theological scholarship. She directs this message to those in “the guild” who purportedly gaze upon religion from a purely scientific purview. Using the German Protestant historicist Ernst Troeltsch as object lesson, she cautions against the unwitting universalizing of a naturalistic, historical worldview under the academic hegemonic rhetoric of objective scientific observation. She warns the “historians of religion” to resist the delusion that they are “somehow inoculated against theological dogmatism and racial and cultural bigotry solely by virtue of their being pluralistic in orientation and historical in method.”⁵⁷ And she questions whether the discourse of religious pluralism tends to continue the “transference and transmutation of a particular absolutism from one context to another” (from overt Christian dogmatism to covert universal naturalism), which “makes this process of transmutation very hard to identify and nearly impossible to understand.”⁵⁸ We must attend, she cautions, to “the story we tell from time to time to put ourselves to sleep.”⁵⁹

Though Masuzawa’s intent and interests are largely (though not completely) divergent from the current conversation about theological education, the historical lessons she offers are critical for how we conceptualize religious diversity, define religious minorities, and discuss Christian privilege in American theological education.

⁵⁶ This was especially true of the most liberal Protestant religious scholars, Masuzawa claims, who were seeking to reconcile their own faith with the rapidly changing, hopelessly optimistic, prewar society of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁵⁷ Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 326.

⁵⁸ Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 326–327.

⁵⁹ Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 328.

We ignore her findings, as we will see, at the peril of students in the religious minority at our Christian yet religiously plural theological schools.

Christian-Centrism in Theological Education

With the increase in occurrences and awareness of religious plurality, American theological schools face a more radically different cultural context than ever before. Regardless of their form or focus, these historically Christian schools now educate students who will enter careers in ministry, counseling, education, scholarship and other forms of leadership that will likely occur in a religiously diverse, yet hegemonically Christian society. This has obvious implications for the explicit curricula of such institutions, but it also raises questions about how they should respond to the realities and complexities of Christian privilege, as Christian institutions, in religiously diverse social surroundings. Kathleen Greider, who teaches at a mainline Protestant seminary, offers a helpful perspective as we begin to consider this dilemma.

In a recent piece on the implications of religious diversity in the (largely Christian) field of practical theology, Greider addresses what she calls “Christian-centrism” in a discipline that grew out of and is still largely Christian in its history and purview. The fact of religious diversity is no longer avoidable, she says. “If there *was* a time when religious traditions were securely bounded each in a separate geographic region of the globe and distinguishable through distinct cultural lineages, this is no longer the case,” she writes [emphasis added].⁶⁰ Not only must practical theologians be attuned

⁶⁰Kathleen J. Greider, “Religious Pluralism and Christian-Centrism,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 453.

to religious plurality and pluralism, she argues, they must equally be attentive to religious alterity, which she describes as the “dimensions of difference in religious identity and contexts that will always be indisputably other, not translatable, even alien.”⁶¹ But she explains that “generic” approaches to alterity in practical theology are increasingly being met with skepticism, perhaps to avoid a similar hegemonic trap to the one described by Masuzawa in the abstraction of “world religions.” “Alterity is honored,” she says, “by candid discussion of the limits of tolerance in the context of religious pluralism.”⁶² In this sense, if “difference” in religiously diverse contexts is not contextualized with specific information, the abstraction of “alterity” could be an unwitting overlay of Christian categories and concepts onto consideration of religious plurality and alterity.

Greider stops short, however, of a fuller critique of practical theology and other disciplines that have grown out of and continue to sustain Christian-centrism at their core. While there is an understandable need not to forsake one’s own religious tradition in the interest of religious pluralism, there is also an emerging responsibility to transform not only how majority religious perspectives engage the study of religious difference, but what they do with their own Christian dominance. Greider would likely say that disrupting Christian norms in practical theology is implicit in a focus on multireligious scholarship. But unless this is made explicit, the discipline risks relying on unacknowledged Christian assumptions to categorize and engage religious minorities.

This point is notable because theological schools—as communities rooted in the Christian tradition—are at precisely the same crossroads. A number of progressive seminaries in North America have for years considered religious

⁶¹Greider, “Religious Pluralism and Christian-Centrism,” 455.

⁶²Greider, “Religious Pluralism and Christian-Centrism,” 458.

diversity an integral aspect of contemporary theological education, and it is increasingly common for these schools to welcome students who are not Christian into their midst. This raises the critical question, therefore, of how a school's administration and faculty can best bring Christian-centrism to their collective consciousness and identify the ways in which the school's history, Christian practices, and overall ways of being community confer privilege on those in the religious majority. Only then can a school take concrete steps to engage in religious alterity with curiosity and honesty and begin to disrupt those patterns that are invisible to the Christian majority. It can then embark on efforts of cultural transformation in the organization that better support the educational success of not only religious minorities but all learners, regardless of their status within the organization. Only then can a school, across the organization, begin to think the unthinkable.

CHAPTER 2:

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

Grieder concludes her chapter on “Religious Pluralism and Christian-Centrism” with a strong case for why practical theology should vigorously engage issues of religious pluralism:

The field’s disciplinary methods, especially the value practical theology places on descriptive empiricism, will considerably augment the current scholarly discussion on theologies of religious pluralism and comparative theology, which have tended to take place at the level of theory. Practical theologians could initiate multireligious scholarly inquiry into *lived* religious pluralism ...⁶³

This could happen, she imagines, with empirical approaches to concrete issues in actual communities, with research questions such as “Why do you pray/meditate?” and “In what ways is your religious community important to you?” In so doing, the discipline of practical theology would have much to offer the critical consideration of religious pluralism in the United States and beyond.

The methodology of this project has its roots in the empirical assumptions of practical theology. Indeed, the study is more than an academic exercise for a proper and passable dissertation. Astute observers will recognize aspects of the approach used in these case studies as transferable to institutions seeking to learn more about the implications of religious diversity within their schools. The basic foundation of this approach assumes intellectual honesty, cultural curiosity, and a willingness to engage institutional research for the purpose of personal transformation and organizational improvement.

This begins with grounded theory, which is a theoretical foundation for qualitative

⁶³Greider, “Religious Pluralism and Christian-Centrism,” 459.

research that dates to the 1960s but has grown into a mainstream approach in contemporary academic and activist contexts. Simply stated, grounded theory assumes that theory is rooted in, and grows out of, contextual data, beginning with observations of a concrete context and inducts a theory from the observations. This approach requires a great deal of creativity, judgment, and moral choices from the researcher. As a tool of the social sciences, it is often focused on producing perspectives that are actionable; it has particularly been developed in recent years by those engaged in action research. In this sense, grounded theory is inherently pragmatic in its goals.

While grounded theory is a research methodology, it is also an investigative orientation that helps define the work of the researcher. Grounded theory is both critical and creative, making it akin to both a science and an art. It accounts for—indeed, depends upon—the active insights of the researcher as a participant with the data and context in order to produce theory that resembles reality and is actionable. Metaphysical and philosophical concerns aside, grounded theory results in scholarship that is practically oriented, contextually situated, and socially responsible. The benefit of grounded theory in this regard is making explicit the role and responsibilities of the researcher relative to the content and context of his or her scholarship. In the case of this study, as an administrator in theological education, I am not a dispassionate observer but rather an active participant and learner in the content and method of this research.

Selection of Cases

To better understand institutional responses to religious diversity and the roles of Christian privilege, the institutions themselves—the people and processes within them—had to serve as the primary sources of data. This involved identifying and approaching

theological schools with religiously diverse student populations, where dynamics of diversity and privilege were already being played out. Therefore, in early 2010, I approached the Association of Theological Schools for assistance in identifying institutions in their membership with any populations of non-Christian students.⁶⁴ The association provided a list of institutions with enrollments of at least five students who do not identify as Christian. The list was a short one, with only six schools reporting non-Christian (Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim) enrollments. On this list, several schools were obvious outliers, which narrowed it considerably to a selection of three institutions. All were well-established theological schools with significant populations of students who did not identify as Christian. All three were approached to take part in this research, and all three agreed and participated.⁶⁵

The Survey

After making arrangements with administrators from each institution and satisfying human research protocols with each school, I asked for their assistance in identifying student participants for surveys and on-site interviews. Each institution sent invitations to various students who independently responded to me if they wanted to participate. The institutions were asked to identify students who were in the religious minority as well as those in the Christian majority. Each student was sent a short online

⁶⁴ I am grateful to Chris Meizner at the Association of Theological Schools for his assistance in this research.

⁶⁵ Claremont School of Theology and Claremont Lincoln University, the institutions that have inspired me to conduct this research, were not among the three schools selected for two primary reasons. The first is related to a degree of critical distance as I engaged this topic: I wanted to examine these phenomena as a relative outsider. The second reason is more objective: at the time of selection, Claremont School of Theology did not meet the selection criteria; it did not have a critical mass of non-Christian students. Today, that would not be the case.

survey, to which nearly all responded.

The survey proved to be a critical component of this project. The intended purpose of the survey was to explore the ways in which Christian privilege did and did not exist and exhibit itself at these schools. A number of survey questions were adapted from the list of “Christian privileges” identified by Schlosser,⁶⁶ who offers cultural criteria for whether Christian privilege exists in a certain situation. Examples from his list include:

I can be sure to hear music on the radio and watch specials on television that celebrate the holidays of my religion.

I can assume that I will not have to work or go to school on my significant religious holidays.

I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my religion most of the time.

I can buy foods (e.g. in grocery store [sic], at restaurants) that fall within the scope of the rules of my religious group.

From these examples, I adapted survey questions specific to theological education that I suspected would uncover how students in both the minority and majority populations experienced life within their institutions. Some of the survey questions included:

In your opinion, does your school offer enough courses related to your religious tradition(s) or views?

At school-sanctioned events, is there adequate food and drink available that meets the needs of your dietary observances?

Is there a dedicated worship space at your school that meets the needs of your tradition or observances?

Have you ever felt like an outsider during a public event (a meeting, worship, class) at your school because of your religious identity, observances, and/or

⁶⁶Lewis Z. Schlosser, “Christian Privilege: Breaking a Sacred Taboo,” *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development* 31, no. 1 (January 2003): 44–51.

views?

Are you ever expected (by faculty, administration, or student peers) to speak on behalf of your tradition(s)?⁶⁷

Not only did these questions provide insight into cultural dynamics at each institution, they also provided starting points for on-site interviews and discussions, particularly with religious minority students.

On-Site Interviews

Once the surveys were administered, I arranged three-day visits to each campus to interview students as well as selected administrators and faculty from each institution. Student interviews were conducted either individually or in small groups. In cases of small-group discussions, student participants were grouped by their identification with either the religious majority or the minority. For example, one small group was composed of all mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic students, while another included students who identified as Muslim, Buddhist, and atheist. This allowed students in both categories the opportunity to speak freely about their experiences relative to their religious identities and cultural status within their respective institutions.

(After all the site visits were completed, I decided to eliminate one school from the study, unconvinced that the student sample made available to me was comparable to student populations in the other institutions; a number of the students who self-identified as religious minorities, for example, exhibited an element of religious hybridity that often spanned the religious majority and minority populations—for example, a Unitarian who practices Sikhism, a Buddhist Quaker, a Jewish convert from Islam. For this and other

⁶⁷ A complete list of survey questions is available in the appendix.

reasons, I decided not to include this school in the study.)

When crafting my approach to this research, I understood that the graduate students I was interviewing would likely be willing and able to be conversant and identify issues of privilege within their institutions. My concern was that they would try to analyze, intellectualize, and even politicize the interview process once they understood my interests. I decided that a more narrative approach to the interviews would help lead to more descriptive conversations. When designing and leading interview sessions with students, therefore, I took particular care to ask for stories—instances, occasions, particular episodes—that illustrated the points they were trying to make. This proved successful in a number of instances for eliciting “raw qualitative data.” At each institution, there was a particular story that emerged, usually a campus controversy, which I used across interview sessions to explore different perspectives on a single issue. At one school, the story was about the termination of an African American member of the faculty. At another, it was the inclusion of Pentecostal worship in the weekly chapel service. These controversies allowed me to draw out many different sides to the same story, a narrative tactic that proved to reveal cultural aspects about each of these schools.

In addition to student interviews, I also interviewed administrators and a few faculty in each institution. This allowed me to gain critical perspective about institutional issues that are often not readily available to students. Interview topics included how they understood their institutions, efforts they had taken to support students in the religious minority, and institutional perspective about some of the controversies that emerged from student interviews. My personal location as both a student and an administrator was helpful for me as I interviewed peers in both realms.

Interpretive Framework: Bolman and Deal

Once all the data were collected through surveys and site visits, I needed a framework through which to compare and analyze these cases. My concern was not only with documenting the experiences of religious minorities in these institutions but with examining the organizational and educational cultures in the schools. Therefore, I searched the field of organizational research to develop a theoretical framework for data analysis.

I first turned to the schema developed by organizational researchers Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal, in their popular textbook *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership*, which provides an interpretative framework for conducting situational analysis to improve institutional awareness. The four-fold framework they propose is intended for leaders seeking new ways to view, understand and improve their organizations, but it translates well into conceptual comparative categories for organizational analysis. At their most basic levels, organizations can be understood as “factories, families, jungles and temples,” Bolman and Deal explain.⁶⁸ These metaphors point to four orientations or “frames” through which organizations can be described and interpreted: Structural, Human Resources, Political, and Symbolic.

The Structural frame—the “factory”—understands organization as a group of well-defined processes with clear lines of authority, rules, consequences, and a singular purpose. Looking through the Structural frame magnifies the hierarchical, rule-governed, and largely impersonal aspects of an organization. The Structural frame magnifies an organization’s goals and objectives, its internal coordination and cohesion, and its

⁶⁸Bolman and Deal, *Reframing Organizations*, xv.

rational precepts. When problems arise, this orientation suggests solutions that rearrange people in new configurations, that alter the nature of work, or that change the rules to better align internal and external environments. An organization's structure is limited only by the imagination of those designing it. It is at once limiting and limitless, providing constraints and possibilities. But the primary focus of the Structural frame is on the rules and means by which an organization governs its people, not the people themselves.

The second frame shifts the focus to the people within organizations. Looking through the Human Resource frame, one sees the organization as a "family" of individuals in relationship with each other and as communities and subcultures in the broader organization. A Human Resource orientation recognizes the real needs of the people who comprise the organization. "Organizations exist to serve human needs rather than the reverse," they say of this frame.⁶⁹ Drawing on Maslow's hierarchy, Bolman and Deal explain that people need physiological sustenance, safety, belongingness, love, esteem, and self-actualization,⁷⁰ and we rely on organizations for money, meaning, and mobility. When these needs are not met, individuals suffer. As a result, the organization can be wounded by the human woes of those within it; people who are unhappy within the organization can negatively impact the success of the organization. A focus on the human needs within an organization, therefore, will seek a balance between what individuals need to be satisfied and what is productive for the betterment of the organization as a whole.

The third frame is not disconnected from the first two. The Political frame views

⁶⁹Bolman and Deal, *Reframing Organizations*, 115.

⁷⁰Bolman and Deal, *Reframing Organizations*, 117.

organizations as “living, screaming political arenas”—jungles—in which individuals and groups battle for power and resources.⁷¹ The political observer will see diverse coalitions with deep differences that struggle for limited resources and the power to control or allocate them within the organization. These struggles take the form of negotiations and positioning—sometimes through subversion or sabotage—to achieve certain ends or amass power. These struggles understandably can result in conflict, as groups vie for limited pieces of the organizational pie. As a result, the values, goals, and functions of an organization, when seen through the Political frame, are propelled forward through internal political conflicts, bargaining, and struggles.

The final frame is often perplexing for many organizational researchers (though it will be more intuitive for theological educators). The Symbolic frame understands the organization as a “temple,” a site of cultural participation, sense-making, meaning-making, and emotional (perhaps even spiritual) connection. More than the Human Resource orientation, this orientation pays attention to how people resolve ambiguity and participate in symbolic acts to make sense of their surroundings. The Symbolic frame pays attention to an organization’s rituals, celebrations, stories, heroes, humor, and initiations. The symbolic life of an organization is tied up with its culture. The Symbolic frame recognizes the ways in which an organization operates as a tribe, with a historical saga in which its members participate. The Symbolic frame examines how people use symbols “to find meaning in chaos, clarity in confusion, and predictability in mystery,” which ultimately produce something greater than their individual contributions.⁷²

While analysis through each of these frames is useful on its own merits, the

⁷¹Bolman and Deal, *Reframing Organizations*, 186.

⁷²Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 251.

different colored lenses are more powerful when they overlay each other to provide a more holistic understanding of a situation or organization. Each of these orientations, and the organizational patterns to which they point, are necessarily partial and incomplete. But when the observations from each are laid over and next to each other, a more complete picture emerges that accounts for various and variegated dynamics in a particular organizational scenario. This four-part framework, therefore, can provide access to the cultural dynamics and narrative arcs with which an observer can write an organization's story. This makes the process more about subjective interpretation than mere objective discovery. It's more art than science.

Bolman and Deal's research is grounded in observation of corporate, governmental, and educational institutions, and they intended this framework for use by organizational leaders to more effectively evaluate what is happening within their organizations for the purpose of making better decisions and being more effective leaders. However, this schema also is well suited as an interpretive framework for organizational analysis by an external observer, such as the role I played in researching these theological schools. In approaching a comparative analysis of different organizations, the Bolman and Deal framework provides consistent categories with which to investigate the schools and through which to interpret and compare what is happening within them.

In the context of the two theological schools selected for this study, and the experience of religious minorities within them, Bolman and Deal's framework lines up well with how these institutions operate. Structurally, theological schools provide cocurricular opportunities for their students beyond the classroom. These include points

of formal and informal interaction, play, religious observance, etc. They also pay attention to the human needs of their students, seeking ways to meet their physical and emotional desires, for the benefit of both the students and the school as a whole. In these organizations, however, there are necessary political struggles from various coalitions for power and resources—time, money, and cultural capital—to achieve a certain level of success and contentment. And at the same time, almost everyone in these organizations seeks modes of meaning-making to fully live into the mission and purpose of their school. Bolman and Deal's framework worked well in providing a basis for comparing these theological schools.

Cultural Analysis: Schein

While this framework provides helpful categories into which cultural data can be organized, it does not offer a concrete guide as to what to look for in analyzing an organization's culture. How does one enter a school as a relative stranger and begin applying the framework? What does an outsider look for?

Organizational researcher Edgar Schein suggests that there are three observable levels of organizational culture. The first of these focuses on an organization's artifacts, the easily observable "first blush" appearance of an organization. Artifacts include "all the phenomena that one sees, hears, and feels when one encounters a new group with an unfamiliar culture."⁷³ Artifacts include physical space and uses of time; processes, procedures, and technologies; rituals and ceremonies; and stories, language, and behaviors. Schein warns that artifacts are easy to see, but not easily interpreted; they can provide clues to deeper assumptions, but when taken alone they can be easily confused

⁷³Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 25.

and infused with an observer's own interpretations and assumptions.

Schein therefore points to a second level of cultural analysis: espoused beliefs and values. As people work together in an organization, they develop theories and patterns that become consciously and vocally codified in its culture. These include shared principles and criteria for action; tried and true prescriptions to problems; and shared hopes and dreams for the organization and its members. Espoused beliefs take root in a group by the process of social validation, by which beliefs and values gain currency by their acceptance by the group. Once accepted, the group espouses the beliefs, formally and otherwise, through mission statements and publications; in ceremonies and observances; and through stories, gossip, and humor. On the one hand, espoused values provide interpretive keys to understanding an organization's artifacts, and they can be "reasonably congruent with underlying assumptions" of an organization. At the same time, however, there are often discrepancies between what an organization espouses (what it says) and the behaviors it actually exhibits (what it does). Organizational observers therefore must be careful in their assessments to identify places in which words and deeds do not align. It is in these gaps that a third level of organizational culture emerges.⁷⁴

Schein calls this deepest level the "basic underlying assumptions" of an organization, the most fundamental, unspoken principles of an organization that pull a group together through shared logic and meaning-making while also creating exclusionary taboos and (what Douglas would call) the "unthinkables" that can never

⁷⁴Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 28–30.

enter into organizational discourse in ways that make any sense.⁷⁵ Schein describes these assumptions as “nonconfrontable and nondebatable,” and challenging them results in either dismissal of the observer or extreme anxiety about the disruption of the organizational worldview. These assumptions ground and guide the actions of those in an organization, and they *can* align with espoused beliefs. They provide legitimating conventions or mental maps by which individuals can make decisions and sense of their organizational surroundings. Douglas goes so far as to suggest that these conventions go to the heart of human needs and understandings of the cosmos.⁷⁶ But they can also reveal the ways in which an organization *says* it acts on certain values when *in practice* it operates from a set of more fundamental, underlying principles. Understanding the basic assumptions, Schein concludes, helps an observer better interpret an organizations artifacts and espoused beliefs.⁷⁷

These three levels of cultural analysis proved important for describing and making judgments about the schools in this study. They gave me tools with which to differentiate different types of data and make decisions, to the best of my ability, about what was really going on within these institutions. Combining Bolman and Deal’s framework with Schein’s approach to cultural analysis provided a powerful methodological approach to interpreting what I found.

⁷⁵Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, 76.

⁷⁶Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, 47.

⁷⁷Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 36.

CHAPTER 3:

CASE STUDY #1

The first case involves an institution that offers master's and doctoral degrees across the theological disciplines, along with emphases in religious traditions beyond Christianity. The research on this school⁷⁸ focuses primarily on students in its doctoral program, which comprises the majority of the school's student body. This is not the case with most theological schools and makes this school somewhat exceptional among its institutional peers in the Association of Theological Schools. The focus on doctoral education also affects how the institution structures itself relative to the goals that such programs demand, which is made evident in the following pages.

Not a typical theological school, this institution is largely concerned with scholarly, not ministerial, formation. This is not to say that the institution does not welcome religious (theological, spiritual) discourse in the classroom and beyond. It is situated at the center of a consortium of theological schools that specialize in ministerial education and spiritual formation. The school shares faculty and facilities with these neighboring institutions, and students take courses from and study with faculty across the consortium. The school is very much a *theological* school, as opposed to a nearby public university that has a strict religious studies methodology to its scholarship. As one member of the faculty put it, students are welcome to "bring their beliefs to the table." A student described the difference between this school and a state-sponsored university,

⁷⁸ On-site interviews with students, administrators, and faculty at this institution were conducted on April 12–13, 2010, and two interviews were conducted by telephone after the visit. Thirteen students were surveyed prior to the visit, eleven of whom were interviewed. In all, twenty individuals were interviewed for this study.

saying that in the latter, you could never ask about a professor's personal beliefs, which is not the case at this institution. "I think the spiritual part of it is upheld," s/he explains. In this sense, the school significantly blurs the lines between the bifurcated orientation of either a religious studies or theological approach that dominated the last half of the twentieth century in the United States. "But it is first and foremost an academic institution," the student continued, which an administrator confirmed: "We are an academic institution, first and foremost." Another administrator stressed that the school puts less emphasis on students' spiritual formation than on academic and professional formation in an ecumenical and multireligious context, which the broader consortium provides. Two administrators independently explained in follow-up emails that they encourage students to engage other schools in the consortium for spiritual support and growth.

The institution is located in a major metropolitan area characterized by its demographic diversity, which the composition of the student body generally mirrors: approximately 55 percent of doctoral students identify as white, with significant numbers of Asian international students as well as African American and Hispanic students. With an average age of nearly forty years old, more than a quarter of the students commute from more than fifty miles. Religiously, more than twenty-five religious affiliations are represented, with 10 percent identifying as Jewish, Muslim, or Buddhist and 11 percent as "Unaffiliated,"⁷⁹ demonstrating a commitment and facility for recruiting students from beyond Protestant and Roman Catholic Christianity. As one administrator explained, theirs is not a "traditional non-traditional" student body, meaning that the student

⁷⁹ The institution reported these student demographics for fall 2010.

population is generally older, comes from greater distances, and, after class or research time, is ready to get back home to family, local community, and religious commitment. The diversity of the student body and the region in which the school is located are important facets to this institution's identity, its internal culture, and its approach to theological education.

The school traces its history to a group of mainline Protestant institutions that formed the institution in the 1960s. From its start, it had a strong emphasis on ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. In those early years, the initially Protestant school established close ties with Roman Catholic seminaries and was proactive in creating a program for studying Judaism. Today, the success of the ecumenical movement can be seen in the school's culture, as the dominant religious groups on campus are both Protestant and Roman Catholic, a characteristic that is unusual among ATS schools. When this case study refers to the "religious majority" at this school, therefore, it references a dominant ecumenical culture of both mainline Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

Structural Analysis

The institution has a clear emphasis on educating professional academics for scholarly careers (theological and otherwise). As such, the school has made a conscious decision to dedicate more of its extracurricular resources to the professional development of its students than to community life (community-building activities, student clubs, etc.) or religious/spiritual life (communal worship, spiritual care, spiritual formation, etc.). Orienting its students toward a primarily professional academic rather than a religious or communal focus is certainly unique among ATS schools. One administrator explained that the institution spends its extracurricular energy on three categories of activities: (1)

helping students navigate the doctoral program (e.g., workshops on program and degree requirements); (2) career development for students (preparing curriculum vitae, presenting papers at conferences); and (3) preparing students to be good teachers. Due to institutional constraints on budget and staffing, this administrator explained, these emphases generally take priority over institutional involvement in directly supporting community life or religious/spiritual formation.

The institution divides its doctoral students along disciplinary lines, creating departmental “areas” for study and collaboration. These areas provide the natural points of contact among students and faculty, as is the case in most doctoral programs. Each area convenes monthly meetings with students and faculty to discuss student progress and faculty research and generally conduct the business of this organizational substructure. It is in these meetings that faculty and administration witness community most often being formed. One administrator said that the “life of the doctoral programs” is seen in these meetings, where “students tend to find their community and their colleagues with whom they have the closest intellectual, scholarly connections.”

The school also has several academic centers as part of its structure that focus on research in particular religious traditions. The centers mostly describe themselves in their publicity materials as academic and research-oriented, though they often attract students who are devout and/or who identify with the tradition culturally. As one administrator put it, the centers provide a “landing place” for students who may not otherwise find a home at an institution with roots in the Christian tradition. These centers are central to the identity of the school, the administrator continued, and it would be difficult to imagine a theological school with a credible reputation as an interreligious institution without them.

The director of one long-standing center said it was “at the heart” of the school and that the institution would be a very different place without its presence. The director of another center said it “fulfills a largely interfaith effort of the [school], that is, it fulfills largely Christian efforts to be more diverse and open and inclusive.” Beyond their internal service to students and faculty, the centers also interact with external constituencies, both related to their respective traditions and in broader interfaith research and practice. This outreach further solidifies the school’s reputation as an interfaith institution and adds a level of responsibility and accountability to external constituencies, even when those may be in conflict. This requires that the institution develop creative “third ways” of cooperation amidst religious and cultural diversity.

These complex and codependent structural realities ensure a vibrant interreligious context for theological education, especially for the preparation of scholars of theology and/or religious studies. Indeed, the school’s institutions grow out of and reinforce its primary purpose of producing professional academics, and it intentionally prioritizes its resources for these ends over attention to the religious, spiritual, or emotional needs of its students. The institution is clear in its priorities and aligns its resources to best achieve those goals.

Human Resource Analysis

Given the institution’s largely academic orientation, it’s not surprising that the life and culture of the school primarily revolve around academic activities, such as area meetings, special lectures, and educational “rituals” such as convocations and commencements. When asked about student community on campus, a member of the faculty commented that individual isolation and lack of student community is a common

feature of many doctoral programs, and s/he didn't think that the school has any less of an emphasis on community life among its doctoral students than other such institutions. One administrator quipped that the school doesn't even have a physical space big enough for all students and faculty to meet at one time.

While students say they attend the institution for largely academic ends, they do note—and in some cases bemoan—the lack of activities to foster a more vibrant student community. When asked where s/he finds community on campus, one student replied, “I'd have to say, in the first two years, I didn't. ... And I remember thinking, gosh, I want to connect with these people I'm in class with, but everyone seems so busy and going their own ways, and I was headed elsewhere on the train to go [to] where I live.” A second student said, “It's hard when we're all busy doing our own things, and we have different ideas about what community is, and we're all dispersed.” Yet another student who was actually involved in planning events with the student government summed it up concisely: “Building community here is hard work.”

Since the institution does not put emphasis or resources on centralized religious programming or spiritual support for its students, administrators explain they depend on resources across the consortium and nearby places of worship for students to engage on their own. Relying on other sources of religious programming and spiritual support is a conscious decision made by the school, which one administrator described as an “effective model” for the institution. This strategy seems to work well for students in the religious majority: several Christian students said they are active in local congregations or participate in community life at other schools in the consortium.

Those in the religious minority, however, reported different experiences. One

student, who identified as Buddhist, said, “I don’t think my religiosity gets fed much here.” A Muslim student recounted the first-year experience after moving to the area to begin doctoral studies: “My first Ramadan here was horrible,” s/he said, explaining that there wasn’t “the rhythm of Ramadan” on campus. “It felt very isolating, on a social level, in some ways on an intellectual, in other ways on a spiritual level,” s/he said, adding with sarcasm, “So it was a very, um, *interesting* year.”

While Protestant and Catholic students have other sources of community and spiritual support in the consortium, students in the minority do not seem to find equal sources of support within the institution. Even though the various tradition-specific research centers provide a “home base” for students from those traditions, there appears to be a gap in the effectiveness of the resources provided by the institution for the religious and spiritual support of these students. Focusing on the intellectual and professional needs of students allows the majority religious ethos to implicitly support students in those traditions while not providing similar care for students in the religious minority.

Political Analysis

As noted previously, Bolman and Deal describe the Political frame as concerned with competition for resources and power. Like many institutions of higher learning, this school exhibits the predictable struggles for a doctorate-granting institution: the expected ideological and generational conflict among faculty; the evergreen disequilibrium between good ideas and financial resources; and student concerns about scholarship support, faculty diversity, and critiques of the prevailing canon of literature. Since the school’s emphasis is placed more on academic preparation and professional formation, its

political struggles seem to center on issues of course offerings, faculty representation, and cultural diversity more than extracurricular, religious, or spiritual concerns.

At this historically and predominantly Christian institution, the preponderance of courses on Christian topics is to be expected, with significantly fewer classes offered in—and taught by professors from—traditions other than Christianity. Faculty with appointments at member institutions in the consortium offer a preponderance of the courses, which accounts for the vast majority of courses focused on Christianity. The school itself has relatively few faculty of its own. A number of students in the religious minority explained how they regularly cross enroll at an adjacent university for many, if not most, of their courses in fields such as Asian and South Asian studies, Jewish studies, Middle Eastern studies, and Arabic. Course offerings in some religious traditions are better represented than others at the school, but students and faculty from minority traditions interviewed for this study usually referenced good relationships with the university to supplement course offerings and faculty expertise at their home institution, which is a good “selling point” for recruitment of doctoral students. Of the six students surveyed from traditions other than Christianity, four of the six replied that they believed they would benefit from more classes directly related to their religious tradition (compared to only two out of seven of those surveyed in the religious majority).

While funding for faculty positions in minority religious traditions is a limiting factor, there also seemed to be, at the time of these interviews, some legacy concerns of a few faculty and administrators about the overexpansion of non-Christian courses, especially at the expense of those focused on Christian topics. One faculty member recounted a particular meeting when the faculty and administration realized that in an

upcoming semester, the school would offer more courses in Buddhism than Old Testament. “And they thought that was outrageous,” the professor said, chuckling. The reason was innocuous—most of the Old Testament faculty were coincidentally scheduled to be on sabbatical that semester—but the professor distinctly remembered their rhetoric: “It was interesting how it was framed. It wasn’t framed that we need more Old Testament courses,” but that there were too many classes on a non-Christian tradition. The professor being interviewed identified this instance as an indicator of Christian hegemony that persists in the institution, though the professor quickly added that this has softened in recent years. Viewed through Bolman and Deal’s Political frame, this anecdote reveals an example of a concrete struggle for resources—faculty lines and course allocation—when the religious majority perceived a threat from growing minority presence.

Perhaps the more significant site of political struggle in this school is in the classroom. When asked about their experiences in class, students were quick to reply with their most positive and most negative experiences. Those in the religious majority generally enjoyed their time in class. Most of them said they were nearly always among a Christian majority in their courses, though at times they felt like the only one of their specific denomination or sect (e.g., the only Roman Catholic among Protestants, or in one student’s words, the “token Lutheran”). When surveyed, they seldom reported ever being treated like “outsiders” at the school. One Catholic student said s/he once felt a subtle “anti-Catholic” vibe, but even when s/he took classes on topics beyond the Christian tradition, s/he said s/he was still usually in the majority, since Christian students often took courses on other religious traditions.

Students not in the majority, however, reported a range of different experiences.

Two students—one Jewish and one Orthodox Christian—told similar stories about being expected to speak on behalf of their religious traditions. The Jewish student said:

I remember one class I took here where I was the only non-Christian, and they would say in the seminar, “We as Christians ...” and then someone would always point at me. And then I would be called upon to give the Jewish account, you know, “Well, how do *Jews* see this?” I would always think [to myself], “How *do* Jews see this?”

The student went on to describe the dilemma of serving as *the* authoritative Jewish reaction to class topics. Hearing this story, the Orthodox student laughed and said that s/he has been the only Orthodox Christian in all but one course. The student said s/he is often asked about “the Orthodox view” on a particular topic, to which the answer is humorously prefaced with, “Well, let me speak for a quarter of all Christians.”

One student, an American Buddhist, recounted the story of a class s/he considered taking on Christian-Buddhist dialogue. The catalog description of the course explained that students would be asked to respond to readings from their Christian perspective. When the student asked the professor by email if s/he could respond from a Buddhist perspective, the professor said s/he could, but “most of the students were Christian and *we’re* going to present the Buddhist perspective.” The student decided against taking the course and “reported” this exchange to the “upper echelons” of the administration, but s/he said that the course (at the time of these interviews) was still offered with the same description. “My sense is that they are discouraging outsider perspectives, even in classes about those peoples’ traditions,” the student concluded. The student had similar accounts from other classes, when s/he felt that her tradition was “trivialized,” “exoticised,” “abstracted,” and “watered down” into a form of “healing technology” or “psychology.” S/he said, “It’s really frustrating. ... And if *I’m* the person to point it out, I’m just a big

meanie, or I'm 'into that postcolonial theory' ... and people don't like that."

One Muslim student said s/he is "fully aware that I'm studying in a Christian institution" and is "really fine" with that. "I think that there's a lot of space ... made for my tradition and my expression of my tradition in my classes," s/he explained. But the student noted that Islamic perspectives are usually not included in non-Islamic courses. In general topic classes, s/he said:

I have found because the majority of the students are Christians or from a Christian denomination ... I have to take the subject material and say, OK, this is what it would mean for an Islamic take on this, or [for] me as a Muslim, this is how I feel about this. If we're doing a reading or something like that, I have to put that in there.

An atheist student had similar feelings while at the same time recognizing that s/he is enrolled in a Christian institution. "I don't know to what extent I should assert myself [as an atheist]," s/he said. Another student, a Muslim convert, reported a particularly bad experience in a class where s/he was expected to know more about Islam than s/he did and felt criticized by the professor because of it. The student explained that this was also the last class s/he took from the school, opting to take university courses instead for the remaining coursework. "I want to *get* an education, not *give* one," s/he said.

The director of one of the religious centers confirmed that s/he had heard this complaint from some students, saying, "You know, we have students who run the entire range of ... just wanting to do [studies in their field] and they just don't want to have to always teach everyone about [their religious tradition]." Of the six students interviewed in the religious minority, three replied that their religious perspective was not usually

included in course syllabi or discussions.⁸⁰ Three of the six also said they have been asked to speak on behalf of their traditions, and three said they kept quiet when they thought perspectives from their traditions would have enriched classroom conversation. All six, however, said they have felt like “outsiders” to the school’s majority religious culture in one way or another.

These episodes, among others, help reveal the ongoing negotiation for power and resources between coalitions of diverse groups with competing interests and needs. Students in the religious minority clearly struggle for educational parity and religious understanding in the dominant institutional culture. While it is not uncommon for graduate students to have critiques and complaints about their institution, students in the religious minority reported radically different experiences in the institution from ones reported by those in the Protestant-Catholic majority. While some complaints overlapped (e.g., the lack of sufficient financial assistance), those in the religious minority had significantly different concerns from those in the majority. The episode recounted above by a faculty member concerning the increase in Buddhist classes also indicates a certain level of awareness and struggle among administrators and faculty with the growing presence and influence of the religious subcultures within the school. Both within and beyond the classroom, the presence and place of religious minorities is causing certain levels of competition, either consciously or otherwise, for institutional time and resources.

Symbolic Analysis

⁸⁰ One student answered in the affirmative because most of the courses s/he takes are at the university and have a religious studies—and therefore a comparative—orientation.

Considering the lower priority for programming events related to community and religious life, the symbolic significance of other public events at this theological school takes on a heightened importance in the life of the institution. When asked about public events on campus, many students mentioned the occasional meetings called around special issues of timely concern, often organized by the student council or by the administration. (One example that several students mentioned was a recent campus meeting about racial/ethnic diversity of the faculty in the school and across the consortium.) By their nature, such meetings seem to be symbolically charged arenas in which students can speak and be heard on major issues and publicly deliberate about problems and solutions affecting the school. The doctoral area meetings are also important events in the life of the institution; as one administrator described them, they operate as “business meetings” for the doctoral fields, where students present their research for peers and faculty to review and discuss. Their peers also participate in an approval process for dissertation research, which adds another level of importance to public deliberation. In all these examples—what Bolman and Deal would call symbolic “theaters”—the act of public participation and democratic deliberation holds a symbolic place of significance in the school’s culture. It is through the process of public critique and contestation that students participate in the symbolic act of defining cultural expectations and making meaning in the institution. Together, they help shape institutional culture and meaning—“the way we do things around here.”

Another major aspect of this school’s symbolic life is its emphasis on diversity—the racial, ethnic, inter/national, gender, generational, sexual and religious diversity of students and faculty. More than a demographic reality, diversity is an espoused value and

organizing principle at the institution, a theme that seemingly bridges most aspects of this institution, which is closely aligned with liberal religion and progressive politics. The school intentionally features “diversity” in its promotional materials, but the symbolic importance of diversity as a theme and concept emerges in other ways in the life and culture of the school.

For example, the demonstration of diversity is a common component of public events at the school, as students, faculty, and administration all confirmed. Major ceremonies, such as convocations and commencements, often include prominent roles for racial/ethnic and religious minorities in the community. One member of the faculty joked that the school “loves to have ceremonies with a Buddhist nun and a Catholic nun, you know, everybody in their religious garb.”

This pattern of practice, however, does not escape observation or critique. A Muslim student recounted the place of diversity at student orientation:

There’s a *parading* of diversity. It really *is* a performance. ... It’s highly performative to present the rainbow of traditions and gender issues. And I was troubled in our [new student] orientation about this idea of the minorities, and those being brown people. But what about all the other people that would be positioned as minorities? So I found it troubling that in this bastion of liberal and conscious thought that those old tropes are right in front, they aren’t even hidden, they are right there.

“The diversity thing they had going on was disturbing,” a second student said, referring to the same event. Another student talked about the idea of diversity that the institution implicitly presents to its students. In some contexts at the school, the student said, “diversity has been itself a token concept, it’s a cute concept. ‘Oh let’s be diverse, hold hands.’ ... OK, now we’re diverse, now we have a picture taken together for the website. But for me it’s a little more painful. [And] I do feel the pain is real.” Regardless of their

religious affiliations, many students in the religious majority and minority were critical of how the diversity was embodied and demonstrated in public events, discourse, and marketing materials.

Because of this focus on diversity, it seems that institutional conflicts at the school often are framed around the concepts of diversity and inclusion. Several students commented that diversity is a “big issue” on campus. One member of the faculty commented, “We are constantly talking about diversity at all of its levels. That doesn’t mean we have it perfect ... but it’s on everybody’s minds and we’re trying to find things to do about it.” One student recalled a controversy where several members of the staff who were people of color were laid off, and the issue was framed as one of diversity when most certainly there were other pressures at play—most notably, financial cutbacks—within the institution and across the consortium.

It was evident from my short encounter with this institution that the concept of diversity is central to how those in the school understand their community, critique it, and ultimately make meaning together. Not only is the student body demographically diverse, the faculty, students, and administration engage and employ this notion in different ways and for different purposes. As a symbol, it is central to how the institution shapes its ceremonies, deliberates in public, represents itself in the world, and makes sense of itself.

Cultural Artifacts

Perhaps the most accessible artifacts in an institution of higher education are the public representations of itself in recruitment materials, fund-raising appeals, presidential

pronouncements, academic catalogs, and websites.⁸¹ In analyzing this school's mass communications, the focus on diversity is unavoidable. In its Viewbook and catalog, the institution says that its purpose is "equipping leaders for a future of diverse religions and cultures," as "committed to valuing difference," with a "commitment to diversity" and a dedication "to building bridges among Christian denominations and other faith traditions." Its public embrace of diversity aligns with its geographic context, as the school is located in a region where "the diversity of cultures and faith traditions reflects our own diversity," which allows it to "take the lead in exploring the theological and ethical implications of diversity." Theirs is "a model of cooperation in a diverse environment" that "honors differences and celebrates diversity" and "prepares [students] to function within communities that are increasingly diverse, ethnically, culturally, and religiously." The rhetoric of this school is difficult to ignore: the school is distinctive because of its ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity and its commitment to the liberal ideals of inclusion.

In asserting this emphasis, the school says that it is open to a multiplicity of religious and ethical viewpoints; it does *not* identify itself as a Christian institution. While its mission statement affirms a theological stance for teaching "patterns of faith which nurture justice and peace" to individuals and institutions to "express their faith in God," it does not characterize itself in narrow religious terms or locate itself within or alongside a particular tradition. In this sense, the school tries to communicate more in what it does not say about itself than in its explicit statements of orientation. From a strategic

⁸¹ I should note that my nearly 15 years of administrative experience has been in various aspects of institutional branding and communication, including communications for recruitment, fund-raising, executive outreach, and websites.

marketing standpoint, its materials let the reader fill in the gaps.

Espoused Values: An Interfaith Institution

Most of those whom I interviewed in the religious majority were quick to characterize the school as an interfaith institution, and the school's publicity materials would support this as well. On the first day of on-campus interviews, I coincidentally spent the morning talking with Protestants and Roman Catholic students, faculty, and administrators. One administrator said the school has "morphed" over the years into a more "interreligious context" from its ecumenical roots, and another said the school is known for its "interreligious and ecumenical work." A professor explained that "the registration patterns mean that there's more multireligious education going on than you would see at the surface, so that a lot of Christian students take the Jewish or Islamic or Buddhist courses, and vice versa." This claim to being an interfaith institution is firmly reinforced by the public displays of religious diversity in ceremonies and other events, the sponsoring of centers for research beyond Protestant and Catholic Christianity, and the orientation of the publications, which often include symbols from across the spectrum of religious traditions.

This espoused commitment to being an interfaith institution is important in the context of this study, especially given the school's primary orientation toward preparing students for professional careers in academia over an emphasis on the religious and spiritual formation of its students. While the school has a certain understanding of itself as an interreligious institution, it does not largely align its resources in ways that support the religious identities, formation, or traditions of students outside the classroom, relying instead on resources across the consortium and in the students' home

communities. While students in the majority have access to religious and spiritual resources in the Protestant and Catholic schools in the consortium, students in the religious minority largely did not have access to the same level or quality of resources at the time of this study. From a standpoint of the school's organizational culture, Schein would likely argue that this demonstrates a typical gap between the institution's espoused values and its values-in-practice, thereby revealing assumptions that underlie its public rhetoric and guide the implicit education of its students, both those in the religious majority and those in the minority.

Underlying Assumptions: Christian History, Interfaith Future

At the time of this study, the school exhibited cultural characteristics of retaining Christian values (what Douglas would call institutions) alongside its public rhetoric of being an open and inclusive institution for students of minority religious traditions. Many of the students I interviewed in the religious majority spoke about the school in broad interreligious terms, often using the vocabulary of diversity and inclusion to express the openness and richness of the institution. But students outside this majority talked about the school using a very different vocabulary. One Muslim student casually referred to the school as a Christian institution and the recruitment of Muslim students as part of the school's "ecumenical process." Both a Buddhist student and an atheist student made a point to identify the school as a Christian institution. When asked directly if the school has a Christian orientation, a senior administrator replied, "Yeah, you have a core that's fundamentally Christian," estimating that upwards of 75 percent of students are from Christian traditions. "So when many—most—of your students are Christian, or a good portion of them are Christian, it tends to be Christian," s/he continued. "But it's Christian

in an *interreligious* sense,” s/he quickly stressed.

Conversations with students and faculty in the religious minority confirmed that the demographic reality of the school’s composition is reflected in the day-to-day culture of the institution. An atheist student said, “The ‘interfaith’ the school’s based on is between Catholics and Protestants here.” A professor who is not Christian told the story of the first faculty meeting s/he attended, remembering “everybody laughing at some joke and someone turning to me and whispering in my ear, ‘Well, what do you *expect* from a Lutheran?’ And I thought, ‘Am I supposed to expect something specific?’ There were all these inside jokes I didn’t get for years and years and years,” she said. S/he also explained a curious transformation that occurred when s/he first arrived at the school as a new member of the faculty:

I was a white person, a member of the dominant ruling elite, with all the white liberal guilt that goes with it. [Then] I get a job at [this school], and all of a sudden I’m this exotic minority. Everybody’s sort of bending over backwards. Somebody at the first convocation leaned over and asked me if I felt uncomfortable. So I was moved [because] I did feel uncomfortable. But I recognized I was in this place where Christians really were trying to be good people. ... It is a predominantly Christian institution, with a very Christian feel.

Another faculty member concurred that the school is deeply rooted in Christian culture and exhibits organizational patterns that support and reinforce that culture. S/he explained that some of the school’s constituencies and partnering organizations pressure the institution to ensure that the “Christianity remains hegemonic,” though, s/he clarified, those are not the words they use. This includes what s/he calls the “unconscious part of all hegemony,” that the stakeholders may not be aware that they are acting in distinctly Christian ways to preserve Christian dominance in the school. One student, from a mainline Protestant tradition, when asked if s/he had ever felt like an outsider at the

school, replied, “Um ... no, because I think [the school] is broad enough that there’s nothing really to feel outside of. I think in some ways we’re all outside of each others’ worlds.” This response exhibits that the school’s culture aligns with that of this Christian student in ways that s/he does not recognize, thereby confirming something about its Christian character.

But one professor explained that the Christian assumptions are beginning to change. The school is “predominantly Christian, it’s hegemonically Christian,” s/he said, “but that’s being challenged by the students.” A Buddhist student explained, “I cringe every time I hear this is a Christian school. I realize in the beginning this was a very Christian school, but I think it needs to move away from that identity and be more interfaith.” S/he continued to explain that the interreligious rhetoric has been common at the school for some time, but today the school may be “riding on the capital of that past.” S/he explained how symbolic public events often reinforce the same exclusionary dynamics that s/he experienced in the classroom.

Commencement was hard for me, in that it was so deity-centric. I recognize this is a Christian-majority school, but I wish there could be some kind of ‘shout-out’ to people that are not necessarily theistic, or that are polytheistic, or that have some other thing going on. When I was at commencement last time, I felt really lonely because of that. Like, all these people around me sharing in something that I did not connect to at all. And yet it was my school. But it was not me. ... There was a lot of God-talk, which is perfectly acceptable. But I just wanted somebody to throw me a bone and to recognize that I existed. ... Part of it for me was that I had an experience of one particular professor [who] tried to impress on me that I really didn’t belong here because I wasn’t Christian. And it’s carried with me. ... This person said to me, ‘Why are you here? Why would you choose this school? ... Yeah, you know, it caused a lot of damage, it really did. So when I go to these public events, it’s like being in third grade again when everybody [else] gets the comment the teacher made about “Christ doing something-something” and I have no idea what they’re talking about. So commencement would have been nice if they could have offered something—not to limit the Christianity, I think it’s lovely and it connects people here. [But] I would have liked if they pulled further away and connected us all.

This student's experience illustrates well the interconnectedness of the school's culture: between what happens in the classroom and the graduation ceremony in this example, and between those values that are espoused in public and the actual values that exist and are implicitly reinforced in the organizational culture of the school. A Muslim student summarized it well: "I think the intention is right. I think the implementation has not followed the intention."

Conclusion

That this institution is unique among its peers in theological education is evident from its primary focus on academic preparation, not spiritual or ministerial formation. It also has an established reputation of providing a religiously diverse context for theological education and an institutional emphasis that has become more focused in the last ten years. For decades the school has wrestled with the hard questions that the presence of religious minorities eventually pose to an institution such as this. And its faculty, students, and administration know that the school's Christian roots run deep; indeed, they both ground and tether the institutions in ways that are self-evident as well as invisible. But this is a remarkable institution that is willing to address these issues, and its faculty and administration should be commended for being on the vanguard of interreligious education in American theological education.

CHAPTER 4:

CASE STUDY #2

The second school in this study is a freestanding seminary founded nearly two hundred years ago as a center for ministerial education in a mainline Protestant denomination, though the school has been unaffiliated with any denomination or religious tradition for several decades. The school exhibits a certain inventive and experimental flair and can point to a record of innovation—in fields as diverse as religious education, sacred music, and missions—throughout its long though often bumpy history.

Today, the seminary offers a variety of degree programs and courses of study, ranging from on-campus residential master's degrees to a joint Ph.D. program offered in conjunction with a European university. Unlike at many seminaries, the Master of Divinity, which is offered in cooperation with another theological school, is not the largest or primary degree. A number of specialized programs are offered on nights and weekends, and the school offers online and hybrid programs as well. In addition to its academic programs, the school has two prominent and productive research centers in the fields of American Christianity and Christian–Muslim relations. As the president explained, the school has several “publics,” which include ministerial students, consumers of research, and interfaith education. Among these, the school is perhaps best known today for its distinctive focus on the education of Muslims and Christians in concurrent and adjacent degree programs, so it is this aspect of the school on which this study focuses.

According to demographics published by the institution, approximately one-

fourth of the school's student body identified as Muslim at the time of the study.⁸² The religious majority is composed mostly of mainline Protestants, who are dispersed throughout the masters and doctoral programs in general theological studies and specialized ministries. At the time, the nine-person faculty was composed of six Christians and three Muslims.⁸³ More than 80 percent of its students are enrolled part-time, 65 percent of whom are from the state in which the school is located. The Muslim students represent an eclectic blend of domestic and international students from a wide range of backgrounds. (During the course of this research, Muslim students from Turkey, Iran, Egypt, the Philippines, and the United States participated in the interviews.) The school also has a well-funded program for international studies, which attracts Muslims and Christians from around the world. Most of the international students, and several domestic students who relocate to study at the school, live together in a limited number of on-campus houses. This diverse group of students comprises the residential community of the student body that characterized the institution.⁸⁴ This study focuses on the experiences of this student population relative to the rest of the institution, since this is where the largest group of the school's religious minorities in the student body is found.

Structural Analysis

Consistent with its progressive reputation, the seminary has a non-traditional

⁸² On-site interviews with students, administrators, and faculty at this institution were conducted on April 26–28, 2010, and two interviews were conducted by telephone after the visit. Twelve students were surveyed prior to the visit, eleven of whom were interviewed. In all, twenty individuals were interviewed as part of this study.

⁸³ The school also employs a number of adjunct professors, with a similar range of religious diversity, including one Jewish professor.

⁸⁴ I stayed in these on-campus facilities among the residential students during my visit to the school.

structure for a theological school of its size and scope. With its various degree programs, being offered at different times throughout the year in various formats and by different faculty, the school is structurally a very diffuse and loosely arranged institution. One administrator, who has a traditional Monday-through-Friday workweek, explained that there is a population of students that comes to campus only on the weekends, so that s/he generally only sees them at the school's commencement ceremony. The residential students, many of whom are international, are an exceptional minority in that they spend much more time in and around the seminary facilities than the majority of the school's student body.

Because of its strong interfaith focus, the school requires all masters-level students to take a common course on interreligious dialogue and religious diversity, upon which many students and faculty reflected during the interviews. The school's catalog describes the course as exploring "the principles and practice of dialogue in a pluralistic world," the goals of which include "the development of listening and communication skills in multi-cultural contexts; fostering an understanding of one another through information sharing and information building action; and learning how to discuss potentially divisive issues constructively and without animosity." Students are advised to take the course at the beginning of their programs to prepare them for their interactions with other students and professors. As one student explained it, the course gives students the "friendly ground rules that say you don't violate certain behaviors" of appropriate discussion and mutual respect as students move through their degree programs. In many ways, this signature course seems to set the tone for interpersonal interactions on campus and, perhaps, is a foundation for the school's organizational culture.

The administration, composed predominantly of Christians, has consciously extended the lessons of this class into the campus community to provide hospitable time and space for Muslim students and faculty, beginning with the central worship space on campus. Because the institution's main building is relatively modern, the school's chapel space was designed in a minimalist modern style with no overt religious imagery or architectural style that would characterize it as specific to any one tradition. The chapel is also open and available for student use throughout the days and evenings; prayer rugs are left in the room and are available day and night for *salat* (Islamic prayer). Remarkably, there seems to be little if any conflict over worship space at the school.

Consideration for the daily routine of *salat* also receives attention at the school. Some professors arrange breaks in their classes around prayer times. Students say this is especially true of Muslim professors but that many Christian professors make accommodations when Muslims are in their courses. One Muslim student said, "I think every class I've been in the teacher usually makes a point to say, 'OK, let's stop to pray' or will set a time at the beginning to stop at this time to pray so that nobody gets anxious that they're going to miss their time." Another student said that in one class taught by a Christian professor, s/he and other Muslims would need to excuse themselves when prayer times approached, but that this was an exceptional case. Muslim prayer is generally taken into consideration when scheduling campus events, though this is not always the case. One student explained that when a school-sponsored lecture did not break for prayers, "a lot of us had to skip out during the event." But s/he added, "For the most part, we have this freedom and we're pretty much on top of our prayers. ... But there's sometimes when it can kind of be an issue." This student told a story of a long

tour of the city during new student orientation, which that year coincided with Ramadan.

The woman, who wears *hijab*, explained:

It was really hot outside, and the tour guide decided to literally take us on a tour of downtown, and we were dying. ... I don't know if she knew we were fasting or [if] it was Ramadan? ... And by the time we came home we were so exhausted and we took cold showers and we still had to wait like another hour for the break fast. But, that was my first, initial experience [at the school].

Another student, however, had a different first experience with the school's generally accommodating practices. When s/he first arrived, s/he thought, "This is a very welcoming, friendly environment."

Despite the administration's attentiveness to the needs of its Muslim minority, the structures of communal worship on campus are often challenging. Like most seminaries, the school has a history of communal worship, which it has tried to adapt for a multireligious student body. At the time of my visit, the school had recently made a significant shift in the structure of its corporate worship. Previously, the school held a short chapel every week at nine on Monday mornings. Faculty and students said the service generally followed a mainline Protestant structure, though its organization would usually rotate among Christian, Muslim and Jewish leaders. One faculty member who is not Christian described the structure as "Christian oriented" with "hymnals in the chapel." Sometimes there was what s/he called an "Islamic flavor" when a Muslim led it or a "Jewish flavor" when led by a Jewish professor. "Otherwise, it was heavily Christian," s/he said. One student, a Christian, said of the service, "I'm one that personally thinks that, unless you have a specific purpose, like praying for peace or something, you really can't do effective worship together, because worship means so many different things to different traditions." The previous blended approach to worship

at the school was increasingly being described on campus as dissatisfying, and the chapel services were poorly attended—an average of less than ten people, by one estimation—due to what several people described as a combination of the format and the time of day (too early for many on-campus students, and when not many commuter students were on campus). So the Chapel Committee decided to make a change.

Instead of a “one size fits all” interfaith service, the committee decided to organize tradition-specific observances on campus among the three Abrahamic traditions. One week, a Protestant leader would organize a service. Another week, the campus would be invited to *Jum'ah*, the Muslim congregational prayer on Fridays, and on the next week, the campus would be invited to a Shabbat service. As an idea, the new format was well received. As one Christian student said,

If you need to have worship in your own tradition and you want that experience, you can get it, and also to have the opportunity to say I have always wanted to experience the worship of someone else's tradition in a place where I feel comfortable enough to walk in and watch or sit in the back. And I think they are providing that comfort level here, and that's a really good thing.

A Muslim student shared the sentiment, saying s/he was pleased to see Christians and even the dean, also a Christian, attending *Jum'ah*. “I became more impressed to attend the chapel for Christians,” s/he continued, “and from now on I will attend chapel with my Christian friends.” A member of the faculty explained it this way:

Psycho-spiritually, it allows each community over a month to be a host one time and a guest twice, and to navigate that shift in relationship. And we know how to be welcoming respectful hosts, and respectful, appreciative guests ... Because if you have an interfaith mish-mash, what are you? You are neither a host nor a guest. You are a confused participant. Or you are a nice neighbor. Not the real world. In the real world, you are either a guest or a host.

One administrator, however, was not entirely pleased with the decision to change the structure of worship, saying it represented the “Balkanization of what's going on around

here.” This seemed to be a minority perspective among the people I interviewed.

Despite the general satisfaction with the new format for religious life, attendance and participation did not increase significantly in the weeks after the implementation. One member of the faculty, whom I interviewed several months after the initial campus visit, confirmed that participation in the new format was not what they had hoped it would be, but the cause likely was not the tradition-specific format itself. Rather, s/he pointed to broader issues related to community-building in this nontraditional school. As this professor explained it, because the school is not primarily a residential campus and most of its classes meet on nights and weekends, the possibility of shared religious life or the building of community is made more difficult. “A lot of our students are already pastors or imams: they are doing their own thing,” s/he said.

Generally, the structure of the school seems to consciously support and take into account the multireligious composition of the school’s student body and faculty. Following its experimental history, the faculty and administration seem willing to try out new structural formats and seem undeterred when a new idea does not produce anticipated results. Structurally, the school seems flexible and experimental, which does not seem to have many negative results.

Human Resource Analysis

With a wide range of academic programs and course formats, it’s not surprising that the school has challenges building community on campus. When asked where community occurs at the school, one administrator replied, “Well, I’m not sure that it does. I mean, it *does*, but not in one full communal kind of way.” The school’s librarian added with a laugh, “One of the places that I *imagine* it happens is in the library.”

From students' perspectives—especially those in the religious minority—the faculty and administration are relatively attentive to their emotional and spiritual needs. As described above, accommodations for religious observances are commonplace, which contributes to student satisfaction and wellbeing. Of the eight Muslim students surveyed, for example, six responded that the school serves food and drink that meet the needs of their traditional dietary restrictions. All eight of the respondents said they were never expected to attend a school event that conflicted with observance of a religious holiday, and they confirmed that they had at least one person of their tradition in a position of leadership whom they could approach with questions or concerns. None of the Muslim students said that they ever felt powerless or tokenized at the school, and only one said that s/he ever felt like an outsider.⁸⁵ By these standards, the school seems to be attuned to the basic religious needs of the largest religious minority in its student body.

The most consistent point of dissatisfaction that emerged in interviews with Muslim students centered on the overly academic orientation of the school relative to their expectations before enrolling. One Muslim student, an American convert, explained that s/he made a conscious decision to attend the school because s/he understood it to be what s/he called a “happy medium” between a religious studies approach and a traditional Islamic university abroad. This school “is the only place that emphasizes both theory and application” in Islamic context, s/he said, where someone can receive academic training but also traditional religious knowledge. The student was then disappointed when there was less access to that traditional knowledge and teaching about Islamic wisdom and

⁸⁵ This student explained that s/he was not particularly observant and considered herself more liberal than most of the Muslims. So she sometimes feels like an outsider among other more traditional Muslim students.

devotion than s/he expected. Others agreed with this assessment. Several students said they take online classes from a traditional Islamic school in the Middle East to supplement their coursework at the seminary. One student said, “This is really academic. When you’re in a class about Islam, what you get is not an education that would lift up your spirituality or your connection with your tradition.” They do not learn how to read *Qu’ran*, s/he said, or read the *Sirah* from a devotional perspective. Another student gave this example:

So, in our Islamic law class, we’re talking about the *principles* of Islamic law, we’re talking about how historically the Islamic legal system has worked, how the scholarly system has worked. So it’s a socio-historical analysis of Islamic law. The Islamic law I’m learning in my online classes are like the practical details of Islamic law.

Even though the institution does not promote itself as a traditional Islamic school, some within this population indicated surprise at the intellectual rather than spiritual orientation of the seminary and seemed to suggest their spiritual needs and expectations for practical education were not being fully met.

Many of the students—both Muslim and Christian—were disappointed with the lack of spiritual support and formation available at the institution. One Christian student, an international student who lived on campus, was explicit about this disappointment, characterizing the spiritual life on campus as “on the lowest end” and that s/he attended church in the community to address his/her spiritual needs. Another Christian student said s/he did not come to the school for spiritual support or development, and that s/he seeks that support in his/her local faith community. Many of the Muslim students also agreed about the lack of opportunities for spiritual development. A Muslim professor said that some of the faculty do meet with their students outside of class and do other reading

with them, but none of the students I interviewed mentioned this in their responses. In one student's words, s/he needed "more spiritual nourishment, development, and also to feel more united" as Muslims. Another student said, "You need to, sometimes, just need to sit back and think about how [what you learn in class] reflects in your faith, and how it reflects in what you already understand in how you practice your faith as well." Yet another student expressed a need for more community among Muslim women: "I don't feel like there's enough sisterly presence on campus, so I'm one of those that needs to get away from the whole academic sphere, because you really lose out on personal connections," she explained. "And so taking weekend courses or online courses where you meet other people, particularly with other sisters, I feel it's really spiritually enriching and that's something that I'm not getting here." In response to my question about where she finds religious community, another woman replied with a laugh, "In my [dorm] room. ... I prefer to pray in my room." One Muslim professor acknowledged the issue about spirituality in general: "I don't think [spirituality] missing, but I think it needs to be 'bumped up.'"

That students arrive at a seminary with different expectations than the institution is prepared to meet is not an uncommon occurrence in theological education, and these students' desires for more opportunities for spiritual development and religious community are not unique. Nevertheless, these students—and the religious minorities in particular—clearly demonstrated a desire for more intentional attention to the integration of the academic lessons of the classroom with their personal understanding of their religion and spirituality.

Political Analysis

It is abundantly apparent that the faculty and administration have worked assiduously to incorporate Islam as a minority tradition into this historically Christian institution. As one Muslim professor put it, "Islam isn't marginalized in this seminary, you know, in one department. I think Muslims are very well integrated across the board here." The school exhibits a genuine commitment to principles of interreligious education, and this study revealed remarkably few instances of animosity between the Christian and Muslim populations. This does not mean, however, that competition for power, control and resources do not exist, even in a relatively peaceable environment. One administrator searched for the right words: "For a place without a single unified community with an identifiable central focus beyond the building, I think it's very odd to have that kind of thing where everybody is just sort of ... we're all ... [It's] not that we're *fine* with everybody else. We're all *happy* with each other."

Even still, some Christian members of the school's community demonstrated a certain level of consternation about shifting expectations within the institution. One Christian member of the faculty said that s/he struggles with how, or whether, to integrate Islamic themes into courses. "There are people who have consciously made an effort" to learn about Islam, s/he said. "The question for me is, 'Do I have to?' or 'How much do I have to?'" This is an issue of integrity for this professor, who explained that shifting disciplinary approaches to a Christian-Muslim framework would be a significant adjustment in method and scholarship. "I'm mindful of it, but I'm so busy doing the day-to-day work, so I can't really immerse myself like I wish I could," s/he said.

Another member of the faculty was concerned about maintaining a balance of

religious perspectives in the research center dedicated to Christian–Muslim scholarship. After a Christian scholar left the institution, the position was filled with a Muslim scholar in support of growing Muslim enrollments at the school. This left the center populated with only Muslim scholars. The professor—whose scholarship does not directly intersect with the center’s interests—said,

Now, they have no one in the [center] who is Christian. They are all Muslims. Don’t you think that position should be the first position to fill, to have that *Christian*–Muslim relation? Instead, they went out and got a Muslim scholar, created a position for a Muslim scholar.

During the interview, the professor’s tone suggested a level of dismay, if not indignation, at this decision. The experiences and perspectives of both these professors expose the understandable struggle for power, control, and representation that underlie the seminary’s continuing adjustment to the presence of and commitment to religious minorities.

Another point of friction emerged from two Jewish members of the community I interviewed, regarding representation and inclusion at the school. As one of the two explained, “Being a Jew here has its challenges, not in terms of how I’m treated. I have complete freedom if I need to take a holiday or I need to leave early for a Sabbath. I’m not particularly observant, but if I did have to [take a holiday], it’s completely understood.” Both implied that the campus climate for Jews was difficult—not because of the presence of Muslims but because of the lack of recognition for Jewish issues and concerns. Both described the school as being in a “chicken and egg” situation. “What comes first,” the other individual asked, “our proactive, symbolic gestures to the community to attract more [Jews]? Or the Jews coming here? What comes first?” The other person added, “What are the signals you have to broadcast to make [Jews] feel

welcome? ... A Jew looking in from the outside will look at the official calendar ... and he will see there's not one Jewish holiday when the school is closed." To illustrate the point, s/he recounted an incident when it was announced that a school-wide event had been scheduled on a particular Saturday. "So one of the Muslim faculty members looked at the calendar and said, 'Oh this is Eid al-Fitr, all the Muslims will be home celebrating,' s/he said. "And I said, 'I have to tell you, not just once a year, but once a week this is a holy day for Jews,' then adding, tongue in cheek, "Somehow, they couldn't find a weekday" for the event? Both individuals suggested that if the school wants to attract more Jewish students, it could take some proactive steps toward institutional hospitality. "I *would* like to have the institution recognize Yom Kippur as a day off—close it—as a symbolic gesture to the Jewish community," said one person. "If we are Abrahamic, I think that's essential." The other individual put it into broader perspective.

This school has been on a steep learning curve. It has flattened out a bit for Islam, but it's still very steep for Jews and Judaism. It's trying. It's not malice or forethought. It's not anti-Jewish prejudice, I don't think. But it's just a lack of sensitivity, not being aware. ... The talk is getting more inclusive, it's getting more Abrahamic. And the walk is catching up.

Both agreed that to attract a larger Jewish presence, the school would need to make concrete structural changes to express a position of openness and hospitality.

Another point of political (and perhaps symbolic) struggle emerged when participants were given the opportunity to read and comment on this case study. In a follow-up e-mail, one Muslim woman who read an earlier draft cautioned me against representing the Muslim students as in agreement on issues of spirituality. She explained that her experience of the Muslim student body is that it is more segmented than I initially perceived, and that many of her struggles were with Muslim students rather than

Christian students or faculty. She told me a story of her desire to participate in organizing the *khutbah* during Friday prayers but not being allowed to do so in a mixed-gender context. So she tried to organize a prayer session for Muslim women, which she said also “received a whole lot of pushback and protest from the majority of Muslims on campus and the community, even though this prayer was just for women, because it did not conform to a very traditional understanding of Islam which many of the students and staff adhere to.” She explained in the e-mail that “the people who supported our cause were the Christian students and faculty, and they really offered us a platform to cultivate our spiritual needs when many in the Muslim community would not allow us to do so.” While it appears this student may represent a minority perspective within the Muslim majority at the school, her admonition against monolithic characterizations of a religious group are well received.

Even considering the remarkable strides this institution has made over the years to integrate religious diversity into its day-to-day life, it is understandable that struggles for resources—such as faculty positions and holiday observances—still exist. Interestingly, tensions around religious displacement or observance did not emerge as readily among students; most of their stress was about the lack of spiritual formation, regardless of their religious tradition. Nevertheless, this example clearly shows that as space is made for a new community in a formerly monoreligious institution, struggles for resources will likely emerge in both the religious majority and the minority.

Symbolic Analysis

A symbolic perspective of the school’s culture reveals much intentionality in providing times and spaces for multireligious cohabitation and cultural construction. The

energy and thoughtfulness put into the use of the chapel space and the worship formats, for example, demonstrate genuine foresight and care for certain aspects of how the community comes together in the public sphere. It is in these sorts of arenas and deliberations that symbolic construction—communal meaning-making—occurs in this institution.

An example that emerged several times in interviews was the subject of using the name of Jesus in public Christian prayer and worship. One professor explained, “We normally don’t like to pray in the name of Jesus, [and] we try to pick hymns when we do Monday morning chapel that aren’t Christocentric.” This seemed to be a generally accepted ground rule for public prayer at the school. For example, during my visit many people were taken by surprise when, during a public event (in which I was at attendance), a guest on the campus was asked to pray publicly and concluded by praying “in the name of Jesus.” When I asked a Muslim student about it, s/he replied strongly:

I thought it was actually uncalledfor. Generally, whenever we have any sort of prayer, the Christians make a point to use very general terms. And likewise, we as well, when we are talking about the prophets, we talk about ‘all the prophets’. The Christians will refer to God and not use ‘Jesus’, and at a ... lunch [for Muslims], to have a guy come up and pray before the lunch that we’re going to share together, in Jesus’s name, I was like, this man needs to attend this school. He needs to know how to make his opening supplications more open to others. So I was rather surprised by that.

This incident—and this response from a self-described traditionalist Muslim student—demonstrate the underlying values of mutual regard and practices of respect for each other’s religions in the public sphere.

Common ground has not been established, however, around singing hymns and anthems during religious or academic ceremonies. This is generally a common practice in Christian contexts (and, therefore, Western society), but it’s not as common among

Muslims, especially more traditional adherents. As one Muslim student, a woman, explained to me, “There are two groups in Islam. There’s the first group that says that music has nothing to do with Islam ... and there’s another group that music has something to do [with it] but not to the extent of leading to demoralizing yourself or the community.” Muslim men in particular expressed their reaction to public singing, and hearing women sing, as a personal dilemma and an example of religious respect. One recounted his experience with singing at new student orientation when he first arrived at the school:

They include within this orientation a way to incorporate the three faiths into it. ... And I was very surprised that all of a sudden they were getting the whole group to start singing together and so forth. And I didn’t want to make everyone feel uncomfortable, but I was feeling uncomfortable. And I just sat down and—[speaking to another student in the interview] I think you were with me, I think you were sitting next to me, actually—I remember a whole row of us, and we were both reading, but not singing the hymn. I’ll *read* it. There’s nothing in the hymn that goes against my faith, but I don’t participate in music. That was at the orientation, the very first thing.

This feeling extended into the school year, he explained, with the weekly interfaith chapel service where singing was often a part of the service. Another male student also described attending the orientation service:

That was interesting. I sat there. I didn’t so much participate because I felt that some things that were done would have violated my faith. So, I was more of an observer than a participant in the service. ... They tried to do a service that would include all different faiths. ... I can recall the singing of the hymns. I understand that’s something that people do in the Christian tradition. The only issue that I thought of for myself, Islamically, was—my understanding of Islam is that we [are] not supposed to be listening to women sing. So we have an interfaith hymnal, and you have everyone there participating, including women, but that’s why I was more of an observer in that one. I just sort of sat back and watched instead of participating.

Another Muslim student, a woman, explained, “A lot of people are uncomfortable with the singing. You know, it was kind of a clash.” Another woman was uncomfortable for

different reasons, telling about her previous experience as a student at an all-Christian seminary. She explained she felt uncomfortable singing or even reading the hymnal during worship:

Every time I attended chapel, they were singing something, and I was always anxious, ‘Should I read this or not?’ That was a real liberal school. They didn’t have ‘Jesus as Lord’ so many times. But I did not read those parts. Every time there was the word Lord or God, I was thinking, does this mean Jesus or Allah? I felt uncomfortable.

The interviews revealed several reasons that singing made Muslim students uncomfortable. For some, there were gender issues at play, as some traditional interpretations of Islam prohibit men from listening to women sing. For others, the foreign activity of singing in a religiously charged environment created confusion, discomfort, and in some cases concern that perhaps they were doing something improper, even if they could not articulate what that was. Though the hymns were usually selected or sometimes specially written with a multireligious audience in mind, the very act of singing them was often uncomfortable and even distasteful to some of those for whom the practice was intended. From a symbolic standpoint, this practice erected a barrier to meaning-making and nurturing of community.

Despite these examples, this institution continues to wrestle authentically with the most effective ways of coming together as a multireligious community to construct goodwill, common purpose, and friendship across the institution. For this school, the “devil is in the details” as they work to transform public time and space into arenas in which all are welcome participants and/or observers on equal footing.

Cultural Artifacts

The way in which a school represents itself in the public sphere can speak

volumes about an institution. At the time of my visit, the school's mission statement focused on the ways in which it serves God by educating students and various publics to live faithfully in a pluralistic world, without reference to any one tradition. A longer list of values affirms the school's "Christian foundation" and "continuing commitment to Christian-Muslim dialogue." Much of the school's language is what one would usually expect in a seminary setting, with emphases on "what it means to live out one's faith tradition" and opportunities for students to "deepen and broaden their faith understanding." In these representations, the school presents itself as many freestanding and unaffiliated Christian seminaries would.

Statements related to deepening faith are contextualized with affirmations of living religiously in a diverse world. The statement of values includes references to a "commitment to diversity in the Seminary community" and to providing a "safe place for disparate voices." Other promotional materials refer to the expectations for students to "reflect on the challenge of diversity in a dialogical setting" and move toward "faith-based engagement in diversity and change." The seminary is oriented toward diversity as the context for faithful living and the "practical embodiment" of one's religiosity and spirituality.

The school's tag line at the time, "Exploring Differences, Deepening Faith," also captured both aspects of the institution's focus. The school is addressing the dilemma (which more than a few theological schools will soon face) of being a historically Christian seminary facing the current realities of a religiously diverse student body. The school's public artifacts very much revealed an institution in transition from the language of its previous orientation as a monoreligious Christian institution to the new

multireligious reality it now embraces.

Espoused Beliefs: A School in Transition

Based on student interviews, the academic and practical values espoused by the school in its publicity are largely being embodied within and beyond the classroom. It is interesting, however, that many students in the minority traditions, as well as some in the religious majority, do not feel as if the institution contributes to their spiritual development and feel it focuses too much on academics over spiritual growth. This was especially pronounced among the Muslim students who most often expected a more heightened focus on traditional wisdom and sought other venues for Islamic education to meet their needs and expectations. It seems as if the school's public rhetoric is deeply rooted in Protestant Christian understandings of theological education that may be quite different from expectations that Muslim students bring about what Islamic education should be. Granted, many Christian students arrive at seminary with specific expectations for deep and authentic spiritual experiences, but seldom do they supplement their education alongside seminary to fill the gaps they perceive in their formal education. This points to a possible gap between what the faculty and administration espouses (as a "seminary") and what the school actually offers in practice.

The school also hesitates—in its publications and in conversations with faculty and administrators—to identify itself as *Christian* institution. While it does not explicitly deny any religious affiliation, it also does not align itself with a particular tradition. When I asked if the seminary was "Christian," I received a variety of revealing replies. One administrator said, "Without a doubt the ethos of the place, the flavor of the place, is still largely ecumenical and Protestant Christian." Another administrator referred to the

school as “a Protestant Christian seminary that has a major Islamic piece to it, in terms of students, curriculum, and commitments,” and then continued to explain, “It still is [a Christian institution], essentially. ... We’re a Christian seminary that does interfaith dialogue and Christian–Muslim relations.” One Christian member of the faculty used the adjective “Christian” in passing while talking about the school, and when asked about the reference, replied, “That’s what everybody says it is. They [the administration and trustees] keep reminding us that this is a Christian seminary. [But] for a lot of people it doesn’t feel like it.” Another administrator, however, suggested that the leadership often referred to the school as an interfaith institution, signaling a lack of consistent language and, possibly, understanding about the school’s orientation.

Muslim students and professors had interesting perspectives on the question as well. One professor described the school as “ecumenical—Christian-ecumenical—with a strong interfaith component.” And then s/he added, “I call it an interfaith seminary, yet ... yeah, I don’t know.” A Muslim student echoed this description:

I would definitely say it’s a Christian school. ... But it’s a Christian institution that has a focus on interfaith, and therefore they have programs for and welcome Jews and Muslims. ... I think for the most part, I feel that in its worldview and stuff, I mean, historically it’s been a Christian institution, and even though they are accommodating and definitely tolerant and like having people of other denominations here, I think at its root, at its foundation, it’s still a Christian institution.

Another student said s/he often gets questions from Muslim friends, such as “What do you want from there? Why are studying there? Why didn’t you go to Medina [University]? ... Why are you studying at a Christian seminary? It’s never a short answer.” But another Muslim student disagreed when asked if the school is Christian in its orientation. “For me? No. This is not a Christian school.” Is it a Muslim school, I

asked? “No.” “Then what sort of school is it?” I asked. “The school here is a house for a variety of traditions. It’s open for any kind of belief,” s/he said. Most Muslim students, however, did not share this view and focused more on the fact that the term “seminary” in the school’s name implied to external audiences—their families and religious communities—that they were studying in a Christian institution.

Underlying Assumptions: An Emerging Interfaith Institution

It is difficult to pinpoint the core character of the institution, if it exists, due to its obvious state of transition. At the time of this study, its faculty and administration were clearly struggling with how best to characterize externally what they saw happening internally. The school was working with great sincerity to identify the ways in which its historically Christian identity worked against active efforts to embrace religious diversity. As one member of the faculty described, “It’s not clear that anyone dominates here. There’s a Christian majority. There’s an unorthodox Christian ethos, majority sensibility here. It’s not doctrinaire. And it tries to be accommodating. It expresses respect for diversity and really tries to live up to that.” An administrator also captured the transitional moment and the struggles that s/he and others in the religious majority were experiencing:

In many ways ... we are becoming an interfaith seminary, and maybe even an Islamic seminary, at least partially. That’s going to have to be worked on in terms of the vision in the next couple years. So are we a Christian seminary that does interfaith dialogue and Christian–Muslim relations, and now training for Islamic chaplaincy, which is a ministry piece? Or are we emerging as an interfaith seminary? ... Are we becoming something else, and should we say that out front? ... That’s a challenge moving forward.

A Christian student echoed this sentiment with a reflective reply regarding whether the school was Christian or not. “I would probably just start with the fact that it’s an

interfaith school,” s/he said. “And that yeah, you have classes that are specific to different faith traditions, but there are people of all different faith traditions who are taking that class who are learning together. And you just learn how to deal with each other.”

Conclusion

From what I observed, the institution is in the process of effectively disrupting the assumptions and structures that become engrained in the culture and practices of a historically Christian institution. The school demonstrates healthy struggles, authentic conflicts, and open communication, all of which generally are approached with goodwill and a common commitment to one institution that educates people of different religious traditions side by side. Even as the school wrestles with what it calls itself—a discussion that’s doubtless enveloped in the politics of external constituencies and funding—under close observation it presents itself as an interreligious institution of higher learning successfully striving for effective interreligious education.

CHAPTER 5:

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Contemporary theological education is now face to face with significant shifts in religious, cultural, and global landscapes. Those of us in American theological education understand all too well the urgency of cultural changes such as declines in mainline Protestantism, the shifts in postevangelical models of ecclesiology, the effects of immigration and ethnic diversity on the religious composition of the United States, and the rising number of young people (in particular) who choose no religious affiliation. These are unusual times—perhaps the perfect storm—for American theological education.

The two theological schools described in these case studies, and a handful of others in North America, have already begun educating Christians alongside those from other religious traditions. Other seminaries are now in a position to decide whether and how to build on the pioneering work of these schools in order to stay in step in the “new religious America.” What lessons can be learned, what wisdom can be gleaned, from these two schools that can aid other institutions as they consider the prospects of interreligious education? To what extent must a seminary focus its resources, orientation, and mission on being an interreligious institution? In this final chapter, I reflect on several specific findings the research reveals and advocate for a particular approach from organizational development that may be helpful for Christian seminaries considering major shifts into interreligious education.

Lessons Learned from Two Cases

This study has demonstrated that schools making the decision to engage in interreligious education should consider how they plan to align financial and human resources for all students to be successful. Student support and services comes in many shapes and sizes and can mean any number of activities in a variety of sectors of an educational institution. The two schools in this study offered several specific aspects of student support that multireligious seminaries may want to consider.

The first is the possible importance of religious programming and accommodation for minority traditions in the Christian seminary. The second case demonstrated that providing an open and welcoming space for prayer, adjusting class breaks to allow for *salat*, and introducing tradition-specific opportunities for worship was well received and perceived as beneficial by the Muslim students in this seminary. The specific adjustments will need to be tailored for the particular populations a school attracts, but this institution was able to determine what would meet the minimum religious needs of students beyond the classroom setting. As the first case demonstrated, not having religious programming leaves students on their own to find the support they need, and religious minorities—especially if they are relocating to new communities for their graduate education—likely have fewer options for religious support beyond the theological school. This places students in the minority at an obvious disadvantage, as students in the majority will have more options for religious community and, therefore, improved odds for educational success.

Closely related to religious accommodation is the possible need for spiritual support, which can take many forms in theological education. Even considering the

lengths to which the second school went to meet the religious expectations of its Muslim students, the students still experienced a desire for more spiritual engagement and teaching than the Christian seminary was prepared to offer. Most certainly, spiritual formation and theological education in Islamic context is different from the expectations in a Christian, and especially a progressive, seminary, so theological schools must be vigilant about understanding the emerging and evolving spiritual needs of their students from other religious traditions and do all they can to provide a positive extracurricular environment.

To achieve this, theological schools may want to consider how to create and/or fill positions of academic and administrative leadership with individuals from the traditions they are seeking to serve. In both cases, students in the religious minority had professors and administrators to whom they could go to discuss their experiences and who could help them navigate the otherwise unfamiliar environment of a Christian theological school. If a school cannot provide for such an individual, it may be advisable for the institution to develop relationships with religious leaders in the broader community, help determine the student support they can provide, and enter into formal agreements or informal arrangements to connect students with the necessary resources within their traditions. Navigating unfamiliar institutions and processes is often a barrier to educational persistence and success for racial/ethnic minorities, and the same is likely the case for religious minorities—especially in theological education, which can be rather peculiar, if not labyrinthine, in its processes and purposes. These case studies suggest that having friendly advocates in positions of leadership can help provide the guidance and support these students need.

All these recommendations raise the obvious issue of resource allocation for a multireligious student body. Few American theological schools have the disposable revenue to create new administrative or faculty positions without significant tradeoffs in other areas of the organization. The addition of new expenditures for multireligious support may very well negatively impact the financial health and viability of the entire institution. However, the first case study offers a palpable example of what may happen if financial and human resources are not focused on support of religious minorities (in that case, the religious and spiritual support of these students). The result was the facility of students in the majority to find alternative resources for religious community and spiritual development while religious minorities struggled to find the same level of support. That institution consciously chose—perhaps rightly, given its academic focus—to emphasize professional and academic development over spiritual development, which was a concern for many of those in the minority. Eliot Eisner would surely remind us here of the critical importance of the implicit and null curricula in the educational ecology of any school, and Jackson Carroll’s research team would reiterate the importance of those considerations in theological schools specifically. What happens beyond the classroom—and what the school chooses *not* to teach—matter to the educational success of all students, those in the majority and minority alike.

Perhaps the most urgent lesson that these cases reveal is that gaps of awareness and support in an educational culture allow hegemony to persist. By not remaining vigilant about the unique needs and desires of a student population, by choosing to emphasize areas of the educational ecology that in effect benefit the religious majority but not religious minorities, a theological school chooses to allow the religious DNA that

is ingrained and engraved in its history to exert influence on an educational environment that on the surface appears to be multireligious but in reality is likely Christian education in the guise of pluralism. Seminaries that want to educate students from beyond their tradition effectively must mind the gaps in their organizational development and priorities—not only in their pedagogies and explicit curricula, but also in other avenues of student support, advancement, communication, and religious orientation.

Multiversity in the Seminary

Earlier in this study, Tomoko Masuzawa reminded us to stay aware of “the story we tell from time to time to put ourselves to sleep.”⁸⁶ Even still, as a theological school moves with great intention to embrace interreligious education, it is all too easy to overlook the ways in which academic and intellectual essentialism so easily slip into institutional assumptions and homogenizing practices. (I experienced this firsthand drafting the second case study, and I am grateful to one research subject who identified these homogenizing tendencies in this research.) Not only does the overreliance on broad religious categories mask Christian hegemony and privilege, as Masuzawa warns, but not understanding the various dynamics of diversity within a category—or, more accurately, within a population or even person—can also lead to misunderstanding and harm. The theoretical underpinnings of this point are critical to understand and will be useful to rehearse in this final chapter.

In a collected volume entitled *Theology and the Religions: A Dialogue*, theologian Vítor Westhell reminds us that multireligiosity is not a new phenomenon, however fresh

⁸⁶Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 328.

our Western awareness of it may be.⁸⁷ Not recognizing the realities and implications of religious diversity testifies to the hegemonic power that modernist categories hold over Western views of the world. Our universe is not unified, he says, and we should resist any impulses toward such interpretations. The task of theology and religious studies, therefore, is to begin “gathering these fragments of a plural history, or a multicultural reality, and of religious pluralism ... knowing that we do not have the whole panorama encompassed within the cultural frame” in which we live and work.⁸⁸ Theodor Ahrens writes in the same volume about culture as “open systems,” composed of subsystems, which produce what he characterizes as “milieus” of interaction.⁸⁹ When immigrants arrive in a society, he explains as an example, they irreversibly alter the overarching cultural system through the values, practices, and expectations they bring, which establishes new cultural subsystems and affects the larger cultural milieu. This theory of multiculturalism applies to multireligiosity as well. No identity is “built of one single strand of tradition,” which highlights the intensely pluralistic nature of not only our societies, but of subcultures, communities, and individual identities as well.⁹⁰ As a Christian theologian, he concludes by calling his tradition to account for its role in such radically pluralistic societies by taking responsibility for its dominant place within them. “Mindful of good and bad past experiences,” he asks, “what does Christianity have to

⁸⁷Vitor Westhelle, “Multiculturalism, Postcolonialism, and the Apocalyptic,” in *Theology and the Religions: A Dialogue*, ed. Viggo Mortensen (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2003).

⁸⁸Westhelle, “Multiculturalism, Postcolonialism, and the Apocalyptic,” 13.

⁸⁹Theodor Ahrens, “Multiculturality and Multireligiosity: Introducing the Theme,” in *Theology and the Religions: A Dialogue*, ed. Viggo Mortensen (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2003), 28.

⁹⁰Ahrens, “Multiculturality and Multireligiosity,” 28.

offer in a dialogue of cultures and religions?”⁹¹

The same awareness and accountability can and should, I suggest, be asked of theological schools, especially those that welcome religious immigrants—literally and figuratively—into their communities. In previous work, I have used the term “multiversity”⁹² in a way that refers to what Ahrens might call milieus of interaction. I use the word broadly to refer to the multiple and overlapping elements of cultural, socioeconomic, religious, national, physical and sexual influences that characterize identity, both personal and corporate. Multiversity signifies the various, variable, and dynamic factors of history and social location that contribute to who people, families, and subcultures are. Multiversity as a concept necessarily transcends homogenizing categories and archetypes, and it demands attention to the details of experiences, trajectories, and narratives of a particular subject. In the simplest terms, multiversity suggests that, like snowflakes and fingerprints, no two people, communities, subcultures, or organizations are alike.

My research with these two theological schools confirms that a commitment to discovering the characteristics of multiversity in their midst is critical for Christian seminaries seeking to serve multireligious student populations. I see at least two important facets of conclusion. The first is the awareness of multiversity itself as an orientation by which those who work and teach in these schools can pull back the shroud of essentialism to better understand the needs of students. But the second lesson, following Ahrens above, is the importance of Christians, as the source and persistence of hegemonic power

⁹¹Ahrens, “Multiculturalism and Multireligiosity,” 29.

⁹²Jon Hooten, “Multiversity: Casting the ‘Di,’” *Harmonic: The Newsletter of the Moore Multicultural Center at Claremont School of Theology* Fall (2006): 1.

in the West, to take responsibility for their dominant and dominating patterns and lead cultural change, whether in society as a whole or in the organizational contexts of a theological education. In opening the doors to students from outside the Christian tradition, it is incumbent on seminary educators—professors and administrators alike—to become intensely curious about the specific needs and desires of their particular students, as individuals and not caricatures of the world religions they represent. It may be enticing to assume that all Muslim students, for example, by their common identification as “Muslim,” have identical needs and concerns. But we know that students from Turkey, Tehran, and Tacoma will have very different expressions of religiosity and will bring different educational expectations when they arrive at a Christian seminary. What faculty and administration may assume to be necessary accommodations for a particular population—based on research of beliefs and practices or even firsthand observations of rituals, prayers, and other patterns of observance—may ultimately prove to be conventional assumptions about a tradition that do not necessarily or effectively support the actual students. Even the descriptive cases in this study should not be regarded as definitive characterizations of particular traditions but rather as discrete observances of religious practices at two particular theological schools. This alignment and orientation toward exploring the multiple diversities in a community to better understand students’ particular needs is critical for the educational success both within and—perhaps more importantly—beyond the theological classroom.

This dissertation is evidence of the importance of research as a matter of administrative commitment to uncover and understand the particular needs of students. Blending qualitative (interviews, small group discussion, and observation) and

quantitative (surveys and analysis of student records) approaches can help an institution understand its student population. As an administrator in one such school, I understand firsthand the consternation that adding more processes to an already full agenda can cause anyone in these institutions. But this research projects confirms that systematic, continual processes of research and discovery about students is imperative for effective interreligious education in historically Christian theological schools.

The Learning Organization

As I hope this study demonstrates, the pursuit of interreligious education is easier said than done. So how does a historically Christian seminary begin the organizational discernment and transformation into a multireligious educational institution? How does it effectively determine the needs and desires of its particular student body? How does it develop an effective educational culture that uncovers and honors the dynamics of multiversity within its students, faculty, and other constituencies? Perhaps an approach from the field of organizational development can help.

Arie de Gues gained notoriety in the field for his 1988 Harvard Business Review article on “institutional learning.”⁹³ But it is MIT business professor Peter Senge who will be more widely remembered for the notion of a “learning organization,” which he introduced more than twenty years ago in his bestseller *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. Senge describes learning organizations as those “where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is

⁹³Arie de Gues, “Planning as Learning,” *Harvard Business Review* 66, no. 2 (1988): 70–74.

set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together.”⁹⁴ He calls on organizations to better understand how their parts work together as wholes, encouraging organizations to become “learningful” as they explore these connections as organizational ecosystems. This rather quixotic description seemed radical, if not an abomination, to the business world in 1990 (and, perhaps, still today?), but it set the stage for a new approach to organizational development, regardless of what sector the organization calls home.

The learning organization begins with understanding the disciplines, Senge says, a word that he reminds his readers is rooted in the Latin *disciplina* (“to learn”) and could be defined as “a developmental path for acquiring certain skills and competencies.”⁹⁵ We understand this as individuals, he says, because people—such as academics, artists, and spiritual leaders—who engage in disciplines are lifelong learners who understand that they never reach the end of discovery in their field. But this mentality was seldom applied to corporate life before Senge’s suggestion that organizations, like individuals, can engage in disciplines of discovery, improvement, creativity, and learning. People in organizations have long understood how to adapt to and adopt new models and fads, for example in management, accounting, and marketing. But engaging in the disciplines of organizational development moves beyond implementing various components—best practices, new models, and structural change—and into a new way of being and working as an organization, which in 1990 was a rather progressive understanding of how organizations could work. Senge proposes, therefore, five disciplines for organizational

⁹⁴Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York; Doubleday, 2006), 3.

⁹⁵Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 10.

effectiveness and learning. And like an ensemble, all five disciplines must be working concurrently in order for an organization to become a “learning organization.”

The first discipline is “Personal Mastery,” which encourages individuals in the organization to develop their proficiencies and pursue self-improvement, like an artist might be dedicated to honing her craft. Personal mastery involves “continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience,” he explains.⁹⁶ Through this illumination emerges something that approximates a spirituality of work, he suggests, where the passions of the person intersect with the needs and mission of the organization. An organization cannot truly improve, he concludes, unless individuals are committed to personal discovery and mastering their crafts.

The next discipline, focusing on “Mental Models,” refers to the core assumptions and practices individuals maintain, approximating what Douglas refers to as “institutions.” Senge says that members of the organization should be encouraged to “turn the mirror inward,” to “unearth our internal pictures of the world” and “hold them rigorously to scrutiny.”⁹⁷ Honestly addressing our mental models also involves risk and vulnerability, he says, as we must “balance inquiry and advocacy” by opening our thinking to others for their consideration and influence. He explains, along the same lines as Edgar Schein, that focusing on mental models reveals the differences between our espoused theories—what we *say* we believe—and our “theories in use,” the ways in which we *actually* make decisions and behave in the workplace.⁹⁸

Honest evaluation of mental models is essential, Senge continues, to the next

⁹⁶Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 7.

⁹⁷Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 8.

⁹⁸Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 164.

discipline of “Building Shared Vision.” Organizations often rely on charismatic leaders to set the vision and then dutifully work to move in that direction, which on its own often fails, Senge says. “When there is a genuine vision (as opposed to an all-too-familiar ‘vision statement’), people excel and learn,” he says, “not because they are told to but because they want to.” This involves revealing and creating shared visions in which everyone can participate. Creating “pictures of the future” together fosters commitment rather than compliance, he says, which makes the organization more participatory, less individualistic, and engages members across the board in the same understanding of the future.⁹⁹ Shared visions can engage everyone in the purpose of the organization, not just those at the top.

Regarding the fourth discipline, “Team Learning,” Senge begins by asking, pluckily, how “a team of committed managers with individual IQs above 120 can have a collective IQ of 63.” The deficiency, he suggests, begins with the lack of *dialogos*, dialogue, thinking together, and “the free-flow of meaning through a group.”¹⁰⁰ The effectiveness of teams, the backbone of most contemporary organizations, is essential to organizational success, he says, and an effective discipline of dialogue can help teams become aware of dysfunctional patterns that undermine group learning and adaptation. “Unless *teams* learn,” he concludes, “the *organization* cannot learn” [emphasis added].¹⁰¹ Learning as teams is connected to shared vision as, together, through the free flow of thoughts and ideas, the team helps create and sustain possible futures.

Senge understands “Systems Thinking,” the titular fifth discipline, as the keystone

⁹⁹Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 9.

¹⁰⁰Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 10.

¹⁰¹Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 10.

to the architecture of organizational learning. Systems thinking “integrates” the disciplines, “fuses” the other four, and keeps them from becoming passing fads in themselves. The other disciplines can exist without systems thinking, he says, but a systems approach cannot be effective without the other four. Poetically, Senge describes systems as the “invisible fabrics of interrelated actions” that stretch across time and space; he uses arrival, immediate impacts, and lasting effects of a thunderstorm to illustrate his point. As such, individuals’ understandings of systems often require a mental shift from compartmentalization to integration, from functionalism to ecological wholeness. He describes this shift as moving from seeing “problems caused by someone or something ‘out there’ to seeing how our own actions create the problem we experience.”¹⁰² As part of the “lacework” of the systems fabric, he reminds us that it is often doubly difficult to see the part that we as individuals play across the system.¹⁰³ In learning organizations, individuals are constantly seeking the ways in which their participation in the whole matters, for good and ill.

Interreligious Education and Organizational Learning

How Senge’s five disciplines apply to American seminaries considering interreligious education should already be coming into focus. As both religious and educational organizations, theological schools have deeply engrained patterns of teaching, learning, and adaptation that are often firmly rooted in decades of history, tradition, theology, and familiarity. Generally, these are not nimble organizations accustomed to effectively adapting to the rapid shifts in culture, context, and

¹⁰²Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 12.

¹⁰³Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 7.

technologies. Even though seminaries are organizations of learning, they are not necessarily learning organizations.

The rise of religious diversity in the United States is but one of the challenges that theological schools face. As noted above, the case studies suggest the possible advantages for theological schools of engaging in patterns of research about religious diversity among their students. While seminaries can add a few more questions to their current student satisfaction surveys, or hold occasional town-hall discussions on campus, Senge might reply that while those will not be detrimental to the organization, they may be more effective if integrated into a more comprehensive approach to building the seminary as a learning organization.

The five disciplines offer one model of organizational development and transformation to make that happen. Perhaps shifting a seminary toward interreligious education begins with an emphasis on creating shared vision in order to harness and direct the goodwill of well-meaning faculty, staff, and administration in similar directions. However, this would need to be closely followed by shifting mental modes and developing patterns of personal mastery, as new skills and perspectives will prove essential to implementing an interreligious vision. Systems thinking will be both a cause and an effect in many organizations seeking such a transformation, and those who approach organizational development and change from a systems approach will become highly valued and effective leaders within the organization.

Only when the whole institution is well aligned to this goal will it be successful, Senge says. He would likely concur that seminaries choosing to recruit diverse students for interreligious education should be prepared to direct the entire institution toward such

an end. This study demonstrates that for a seminary to effectively educate students in both its classrooms and culture, the administrative functions across the institution—from admissions to alumni affairs, from facilities to fundraising—must be committed to the effort of interreligious education. In this sense, interreligious education moves to the center of a theological school's organizational culture.

Interreligious Education as Organizational Culture

This research is primarily concerned with how theological schools can best engage in interreligious education while effectively serving students in the religious minority who comprise the religious diversity that such seminaries value so highly. While many will experiment with ad hoc approaches to interreligious education, the research presents a case, I suggest, for the advantages—if not the necessity—of a theological school's organizational shift to interreligious education as an institutional orientation, whatever that may mean for a particular institution. Not being diligent or insistent about a holistic orientation to multireligious education will result in educational ineffectiveness at the least and neocolonial Christian education at the worst. Recruiting religious minorities and adding academic programs in interreligious subjects ultimately will not be as effective educationally as orienting the whole institution around the mission, commitment, and skills necessary to *be* an interreligious institution, however the school defines and understands that task.

Indeed, such an integrated, intentional, and learning-centered approach to interreligious education in American theological schools may not be necessary, but it will doubtless be advantageous for implementing new programs, successfully recruiting students and faculty who are not Christian, or adapting these institutions to the new

cultural realities they face. This must be done in ways so that students in the religious minority, who are recruited to these schools seeking and expecting new forms of religious education, do not ultimately suffer from ill-conceived, even if well-intentioned, educational programs. Faculty and administrators alike must keep the educational success of their students ever in front of them and do all they can to ensure that end. The ultimate success of interreligious education in American theological schools depends on it.

POSTSCRIPT ON FRIENDSHIP

Since I began this research project several years ago, research and writing on interreligious education has begun to proliferate at a pace that has been difficult to track. Even still, I have noticed an important aspect of interreligious education emerging in this young field that, up to this point, has escaped the scope of this study. The topic is friendship.

Mary Elizabeth Moore, a noted religious educator and seminary administrator, has long been an active voice in the practice of interreligious dialogue and what we today call interreligious education. In a 2009 address on interreligious approaches to practical theology,¹⁰⁴ she emphasized the importance of interreligious relationships for the future of not only the field of practical theology but positive interactions across religious traditions. “Much interreligious dialogue is lifeless and banal,” she said, “because it is focused on finding, articulating, and comparing the essences of diverse religious traditions” instead of exploring the complexities of lived religions and risking the complications of personal engagement and relationships. The largely Christian field of practical theology would benefit from a variety of sustained involvements across religious differences, she explained, which might include patterns of (as opposed to episodic) engagement in religious rituals, such as worship, feasts, and prayer; prolonged discussions about religious questions and passions rooted in scriptures and practices; and extended cooperation on shared ethical commitments, such as care for the earth. Moore did not explicitly dwell on the notion of friendship, though she sprinkled her talk with

¹⁰⁴Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, “Toward an Interreligious Practical Theology” (presented at the Second Annual Center for Practical Theology Annual Lecture, Boston University, September 23, 2009), <http://www.bu.edu/buniverse/view/?v=1xf9i88q> (accessed October 25, 2012).

examples from her personal relationships that illustrated the point. One cannot help but imagine that the depth of interreligious engagements she described would result in friendships. And friendship by definition provides the relational foundations for not only the hard work of providing for interreligious engagement but the even harder work demanded of those in the Christian tradition to continually unearth, disclose and dismantle hegemonic patterns of life and work both in the seminary and beyond.

In hindsight, this study would have benefited from inquiry on the role of friendship in both interreligious education and organizational development. In revisiting the initial student research conducted for this study, perspectives and practices of interreligious friendships would likely have produced additional insights and suggestions for how to better support students in multireligious theological schools. I hope others will consider this in future research on the topic. Likewise, friendship in organizational settings, especially in the approach outlined by Senge, seems to be a result of, if not a requirement for, effective organizational change. It is difficult to imagine areas such as team learning and shared vision developing in the absence of friendship.

Elizabeth Conde-Frazier is a mentor and former teacher of mine who is a self-described “Nuyorican”—a New Yorker of Puerto Rican descent. She was the first to bring me to the recognition of my own privilege and entitlements as a white, middle-class, educated man. In this context, she was fond of saying, “Don’t treat me as ‘the Other.’ Treat me like another.” This requires relationship, not just proximity, and intentionality, not only intellectual engagement. In the end, those of us in positions of religious privilege who choose to engage with multireligious populations of students, scholars and other practitioners assume great responsibility to do things differently than

we have ever done before. Authentic engagement, honesty, vulnerability, and ultimately friendship may just be the key.

APPENDIX1

These survey questions were administered electronically to all student participants prior to site-visits and, in several cases, were referenced during individual and group interviews.

Q1: Name

Q2: School

Q3: Gender

Q4: Age

Q5: Ethnicity

Q6: Nationality

Q7: Nation(s) of Citizenship

Q8: Degree Program

Q9: Area(s) of Academic Emphasis

Q10: What year did you begin your current degree program?

Q11: What is your anticipated date of completion?

Q12: Please list other colleges and universities you have attended and degrees you received.

Q13: Are you a full-time student?

Q14: Do you live on-campus?

Q15: If not, how far away do you live from campus (in approximate miles)?

Q16: What is your primary religious affiliation(s), if any?

Q17: How long have you been an adherent (in years):

Q18: In your opinion, does your school offer enough courses on topics related to your

religious tradition(s) or views?

Q19: In general-topic classes (e.g. ethics, history, practices), are perspectives from your tradition(s) usually included in syllabi or course discussion?

Q20: To the best of your knowledge, does your school offer scholarships specifically for adherents of your tradition(s)?

Q21: At school-sanctioned events, is there adequate food and drink available that meets the needs of your dietary observances?

Q22: Is there ever food and drink present at school-sanctioned events that violate your dietary observances?

Q23: Is there a dedicated worship space at your school that meets the needs of your tradition or observances?

Q24: Have you ever not attended an important school event because it conflicted with a religious holiday or holy day in your tradition?

Q25: Are you ever expected (by faculty, administration or student peers) to speak on behalf of your tradition(s)?

Q26: When you have a problem or concern, is there at least one member of your tradition(s) in a place of leadership at your school with whom you can talk?

Q27: Have you ever felt like an outsider during a public event (a meeting, worship, class) at your school because of your religious identity, observances, and/or views?

Q28: Have you ever felt powerless in a public situation at your school because of your religious identity, observances, and/or views?

Q29: Have you ever felt exploited or tokenized at your school because of your religious identity, observances, and/or views?

Q30: Have you ever kept silent at your school when you feel your religious views would have enriched the conversation or situation?

APPENDIX 2

Theological schools considering their responses to religious diversity may find use in this diagnostic instrument and subsequent chart. It is designed to aggregate data about an institution from across different parts of the institution, spur discussion about what those data mean for the institution, and ultimately offer resources for discussions about how an institution ultimately responds to religious diversity.

Interreligious Theological Education Diagnostic (ITED)

Jon Hooten © 2013

Preliminary Questions

Would you describe the student body at your school as more (1) ecumenical or (2) multireligious? _____

Would you describe efforts at interreligious education at the school as more (1) learning *about* other traditions or (2) learning *from* other traditions? _____

Student Information

Total Headcount: _____ Total FTE: _____ Gender: F% M_____%

Racial/Ethnic Diversity 1. _____ % of student body: _____

(*Top three populations*): 2. _____ % of student body: _____

3. _____ % of student body: _____

Religious Diversity:

Christian traditions 1. _____ % of student body: _____

2. _____ % of student body: _____

3. _____ % of student body: _____

Other religious traditions 1. _____ % of student body: _____

2. _____ % of student body: _____

3. _____ % of student body: _____

Target Student Headcount (3-5 years): _____ Target FTE: _____

Ideal Religious mix: % Christian: _____ % Other : _____

Predominant religious traditions in your city 1. _____

or geographical region 2. _____

3. _____

List partnerships, if any, with organizations affiliated with other religious traditions:

Instruction and Curriculum

of full-time faculty: _____

of full-time faculty from other (non-Christian) traditions: _____

of adjunct faculty: _____

of adjunct faculty from other (non-Christian) traditions: _____

of courses, if any, offered in last 2 years on traditions other than Christianity: _____

Is religious literacy or interreligious skills formally assessed at your school? Y N

Community and Cocurricular Activities

Are any student groups organized around traditions beyond Christianity? Y N

Are any student groups organized around interreligious dialogue/engagement? Y N

Do adherents from other religious traditions regularly speak at the school? Y N

Does the school regularly offer opportunities for attendance and/or participation in worship or other observances from other traditions? Y N

What other opportunities, if any, does the school offer for engagement with religious traditions beyond Christianity: _____

Are there people in positions of leadership from other traditions available to students for mentoring and support? Y N

When the school provides food service, are accommodations generally made for the dietary requirements of other traditions? Y N

Does the school have physical space appropriate for religious observances (prayer, worship, meditation, etc.) of traditions beyond Christianity? Y N

Is the school's primary worship space(s) adaptable for worship/observances for those from other traditions? Y N

Administrative Support

of Full-time staff/administration: _____

# of Full-time staff/administration from traditions beyond Christianity:	_____	
Does the school provide mechanisms (e.g. excused absences, flex time) for students, faculty, and/or staff to observe religious holidays?	Y	N
Are any scholarships designated for students from beyond the Christian tradition?	Y	N
Does fundraising staff seek and solicit funding for scholarships or other mechanisms of support for students beyond the Christian tradition?	Y	N
Does the school have any formal affiliations with interfaith organizations?	Y	N

Organizational Orientations for Interreligious Education

The following chart demonstrates four organizational orientations of theological schools relative to the religious diversity of their student populations and approaches to interreligious education. The purpose of this chart is to assist the school in determining (1) how it might respond to religious diversity in their student populations, and (2) whether and in what ways to engage in interreligious education.

Definitions of parameters

- Ecumenical: Schools with predominantly Christian student populations, which identify as Christian institutions
- Multireligious: Schools with religiously diverse student populations, which may or may not identify as Christian institutions
- Learning About: Schools in which students learn about other religious traditions from Christianity faculty
- Learning From: Schools in which students learn about other religious traditions from faculty who are adherents of those traditions

Organizational Orientations for Interreligious Education

<p>Ecumenical / Learning From</p> <p>Schools with predominantly Christian student populations that offer opportunities to learn from adherents of traditions beyond Christianity</p> <p>Ecumenical</p>	<p>Multireligious / Learning From</p> <p>Schools with religiously diverse student populations that offer opportunities to learn from adherents of traditions beyond Christianity</p> <p>Multireligious</p>
<p>Ecumenical / Learning About</p> <p>Schools with predominantly Christian student populations that offer opportunities to learn about other traditions from adherents of Christianity</p>	<p>Multireligious / Learning About</p> <p>Schools with religiously diverse student populations that offer opportunities to learn about other traditions from adherents of Christianity</p>

Characteristics

- Ecumenical/Learning About:Schools that are predominantly Christian in commitment and composition that likely draw on existing instructional resources to teach students about the beliefs, histories, and practices of other religious traditions. Educational emphasis is likely placed on explicit curricula and probably not reinforced in implicit forms of learning (e.g. community life). Due to the Christian nature of the student population, there is little need for these schools to provide support or accommodation for students from beyond Christianity.
- Ecumenical/Learning From:Schools that are predominantly Christian in commitment and composition that draw on external resources (adjunct faculty, institutional partnerships) to offer students the opportunity to learn from adherents of other traditions. Educational emphasis is likely placed on classroom curricula, including field trips and guest lecturers, and supplemented by extra-curricular activities that expose students to religiously diverse settings. Due to the Christian nature of the student population, there is little need for these schools to provide support or accommodation for students from beyond Christianity.
- Multireligious/Learning About:Schools with predominantly Christian faculty that are beginning to attract and/or recruit students from beyond Christianity (e.g. to programs in chaplaincy, general theological studies, or other academic fields). These schools likely draw on existing instructional resources to teach about the beliefs, histories, and practices of religious traditions. Educational emphasis is likely placed on classroom curricula and possibly reinforced by extracurricular activities. Little, if

any, support (emotional, spiritual) or accommodation (food, time, space) is probably provided for students from beyond Christianity.

- Multireligious/Learning From: Schools that may or may not identify as Christian institutions, with larger, more established student populations beyond Christianity that draw on external resources and/or develop internal resources for facilitating interreligious education. Educational emphasis is likely spread across explicit classroom curricula and extracurricular activities. Efforts are made at providing support (emotional, spiritual) and accommodation (food, time, space) is probably provided for students from beyond Christianity.

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